







W^{ro} R. Stappord

*a small token of regard
from her grateful Friend*

A BRIEF

J E B Bradford.

March 1834.

HISTORY OF THE SOUL:

BEING

A COURSE OF SIX SERMONS,

PREACHED DURING LENT, 1833.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

THESE Sermons formed, as the title-page states, a Lent Course of Lectures, and were consequently restricted as to number. After preaching them, the Author had laid them by, with no intention of sending them to the press. In consequence, however, of urgent applications from those, for whose motives he entertains a sincere respect, he has been induced to re-consider the series, in order to discover why his friends solicited their publication. He could honestly say much, respecting his own sense of the deficiencies of the work, both as to its plan and execution. He could also say something, which might plead in extenuation of its failings. But now that he has consented to send it forth, such language might savour of feigned humility. If, then, this little book, such as it is, be only found to accord with

the spirit of the Gospel of Christ, and to have been written with a single eye to his glory ; may HE but deign to honour it with his approving smile, and make it the instrument of encouraging or converting but one soul ; and the author is more than content, he is truly thankful.

There is, however, one form in which the author did desire that these and all his sermons might re-appear, in a clear type, easy to be “ known and read of all men ;” namely, in the Christian lives and tempers of all to whom he ministers. He therefore entreats his readers to join him in the prayer, that he and they may increasingly become the living “ *epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.*”¹

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 3.

ISLINGTON,
September 5, 1833.

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SERMON I.

THE SOUL IN DANGER.

EZEKIEL XVIII. 20.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

THE soul is the nobler part of man. Its spiritual nature connects him with angels and with God. Its capacities, whether of improvement and of happiness on the one hand, or of debasement and of misery on the other, far exceed those of any other creature upon earth. The soul also is to exist for ever. If the soul be saved, the body will be glorified, and the whole man will be made unutterably happy for eternity ! How solemn, how responsible a charge, to possess such a soul !

Yet that charge is yours and mine. Does the thought never thrill across your bosom, What is to become of my soul? in what state did I receive it? what has been its past history? through what vicissitudes must it yet pass, if, which may God grant, it be at length found safe for eternity among the spirits of the just made perfect? My friends, it is my earnest desire to assist you in those inquiries. Hence, during this present season of Lent, I propose that we attempt to sketch together the History of a Saved Soul. I would describe certain points of experience, with which every soul, eventually to be saved, must, I believe, become familiarly acquainted.

You see then our subject. It is however obviously impossible, in a course of six sermons, to give the full history of any soul. I can but present certain leading outlines, which Scripture and experience will enable you to fill up. And in this I shall endeavour to avoid all matters of doubtful speculation and mere contingency, and would confine myself to things which must

be understood by every soul that would be saved.

We are to endeavour then to trace a soul from its state of danger to its admission into heavenly glory. Those are the two extreme points, the starting-place and the goal, of the course before us. *The soul in danger* will accordingly be the subject of this our first lecture. The next point will introduce to us *the soul repenting*. Another step, and we come to *the soul believing*. At the succeeding stage, we shall witness *the soul in conflict*. We shall then rejoice to consider *the soul devoted*. And, lastly, our course will end, where the eventful history ends as to this world, for we shall trace *the soul departing home to God*.

Such, if God permit, is to be the course and order of our six lectures. Not that these points are all to be experimentally understood by every individual in the precise order now laid down. On the contrary, repentance, faith, conflict, will often be the mingled exercises of a single day. But it is meant that the points to be considered

are all of primary importance, all necessary to be experimentally understood. Let me claim then your best attention and your most earnest prayers. Dismiss all curious and censorious thoughts. Listen, for your soul is concerned. Listen, as to what ought to be, and pray God that it may be, the history and experience of your own soul. Try, with God's help, to follow me, step by step, and stage by stage, that your soul may at last be the soul in glory. May nothing short of that happy consummation satisfy you for yourselves, or me for myself or you! When a soul is lost, we may acquiesce in the righteous dealings of God: but, if you would be our joy and rejoicing, or yourselves know full satisfaction, let Messiah see in you of the travail of his soul and be satisfied!

The soul in danger:—this, then, is our present subject: the true state of every soul by nature and by practice.

Every soul is even by *nature* in a state of danger. This is plainly declared in Scripture: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity,

and in sin did my mother conceive me.”¹
“And we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Our church also in her Catechism teaches us to think of ourselves as “being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath.” Her ninth Article also testifies, that “original sin is the fault and corruption of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” Thus Scripture and our church unite in pronouncing the soul’s natural state a condition full of danger.

The soul is the spiritual part of man, that which thinks, judges, wills; that which influences and rules the body, whether for good or evil; that which distinguishes man from the brutes, makes him a moral and accountable agent, and connects him with

¹ Psalm li. 5.

² Eph. ii. 3.

the world of spirits, and the God of the spirits of all flesh. Such is the soul of man. In its origin, it came immediately from God. The first man could no more have created his own soul, than he could have made the world. We are expressly told, that "God created man in his own image."¹ "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."²

All other souls also are the creation and gift of God:—not that he is the author of their corruption; God forbid! but to him they owe their existence, faculties, capacities, without their sinfulness; all, in short, that they might have been but for sin, all that they are, distinct from sin and its consequences, all that through grace they may yet become. This consideration is very important. He who made the soul has a right to its service. God has an older and a better claim upon every soul than any other lord can have. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves."³

¹ Gen. i. 27.

² Gen. ii. 7.

³ Psalm c. 3.

Observe, also, that as God made the soul, its duty and happiness were inseparably connected with obedience to the divine will. God knew that sin would make man both miserable and guilty, and therefore he kindly forbade it. He knew that to love holiness and God, would make man happy, and therefore he commanded it. And thus his own glory, and man's obedience and welfare, were all closely interwoven. You see God's rightful claims on the soul of man.

“But my soul,” you may think, “as I received it, was not in that pure and holy state.” It is true; but the fault is not with God. I know that some dare to think it, but God cannot act contrary to his own nature, or become the author of sin. The young man often talks, as though there were no harm in indulging the passions which God has given him. But God gave not his passions that corrupt propensity. “God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.”¹ The soul

¹ Eccles. vii. 29.

which God created as the pattern and type of all human souls, was upright, pure, and holy. With that soul, he made a covenant of life and death ; of life for obedience, of death for transgression. And that covenant included Adam, together with Eve, and all naturally descended from them to the end of time. If he stood, they would stand ; if he fell, they would fall with him. How fearful then was his responsibility ! what a motive for obedience in that responsibility ! For Adam to sin was not only for him to act ungratefully to God, and against his own duty, interest, and happiness ; it was to involve his latest posterity in guilt and shame, in sorrow, misery, and death.

But Adam fell. You have the sad history in Genesis iii. Consequently, his fall was ours, it was the fall of the human race, it for ever annulled to man the covenant of life by works. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”¹ “Through the offence of one

¹ Rom. v. 12.

many are dead.”¹ “The judgment was by one to condemnation.”² “By one man’s offence death reigned by one.”³ “By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”⁴ “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”⁵ “In Adam all die.”⁶ My friends, vain are all our cavils, the fact of our being involved in Adam’s guilt is plainly stated in those scriptures. No other doctrine will explain the suffering, the misery, the death, which fill the world. Even in common life, we continually see a similar principle established. Children are every day involved in the moral consequences of their parent’s conduct. How often do states make covenants, which bind the next generation! How often do fathers sign deeds, which will affect their children’s children! How many an ungodly man, who would scoff at the doctrine of original sin, yet acts on the same principle, and does all he can, by

¹ Rom. v. 15² Rom. v. 16.³ Rom. v. 17.⁴ Rom. v. 18.⁵ Rom. v. 19.⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

intemperance, extravagance, and folly, to ruin his children in body and in soul !

Thus is the soul in danger even from man's birth, by being involved in the guilt of Adam's fall. Nor is this all. The commission of sin wrought a moral change in the character and temper of Adam's soul. It introduced pride, lust, perverseness, sensuality, rebellion, where before all was humility, purity, docility, spirituality, and obedience. The Holy Spirit withdrew his sanctifying presence from such an abode as the heart of man was now become. Man, thus left to himself, proceeded to add sin to sin, and to stray farther and farther from God. Was Adam satisfied with committing but one sin ? Do his children, with the history of his sin before them, naturally show no inclination to follow his example ? Rather, is not sin the in-born temper of man, his native element, his favourite pursuit ?

The simple truth is, by sin the moral character of Adam's soul was completely changed. All we are descended from him

in his fallen state, and inherit his disposition. "Adam begat a son," we are told, "in his own likeness, after his image."¹ How different *his* image, then, from the image of God in which he himself was originally created! And thus sharing his guilt, inheriting his disposition, and out of covenant with God, our souls have by nature no holy influence within, no good spirit from above presides, no heavenly principles bear sway; the very thoughts and desires are corrupt, the judgment is perverse, the affections are sensual, the imaginations of the heart are only evil continually.² Our souls now are but the wreck of a noble vessel, the ruins of a beauteous temple. Who shall rebuild this house? Who shall of these stones raise up children to Abraham? "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!"³

We see, then, that every human soul,—Jesus Christ's alone excepted, for he was conceived by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost,—but that every other soul

¹ Gen. v. iii.² Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21.³ Lam. iv. 1.

of man is, from the birth, not only involved in the guilt of Adam's transgression, but also in a corrupt state, prone to sin, inclined to go astray from holiness and God. Do any doubt or dispute? Let them go and learn of the little child. Give him the best of examples, the best of nurses, and the best of teachers: let a pious mother train him for God with all the mild arts of affectionate persuasion: let a pious father co-operate with her, and bring manly wisdom, firmness, and discretion, tempered with love, and sanctioned by authority, to unite in the good effort; and although such training, accompanied with prayer, would, doubtless, be wonderfully blessed, yet would the child never go wrong? Would no bad temper show itself? Yet, whence or how, if he be not naturally prone to sin? Or take an opposite case. Leave a child to himself with no religious culture:—will he go right? among the thousand paths which he may take, will he ever, of himself, stumble on the straight and narrow way of holiness? Then, I infer, holiness is not man's natural

delight. "As soon as they are born, men go astray."¹

You grant then the fact, that man naturally has corrupt inclinations. Then this fact proves, confirms, and increases the soul's danger. For corrupt propensities in man must be known to God, who sees every thing that is in the human heart; and, being known, they must be evil in his sight. Why, if you saw in another a rooted enmity, a bitter malice, a murderous animosity against yourself, you could not be pleased with that discovered feeling. You might pity the man; if yourself a Christian, you might go and pray for him, and then come back and try and soften him by kindness. But the feeling itself must be offensive. So, when God saw in your soul seeds of sin, a root of bitterness against himself, a determined animosity against his holy character, it must have been hateful in his sight. He might pity you; he might try and soften you; but in that state of mind, I mean your natural state, your soul must have

¹ Psalm lviii. 3.

been an object of just abhorrence to Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.¹ And will God have such souls as his companions, the objects of his complacency, in heaven? Would a king take a rebel in his rebelliousness to dwell with him in his palace? Would you select that bitter enemy, with his enmity unchanged, to be your bosom friend? Surely we already see the necessity of having guilt removed, and a new moral character given to the soul, before man can be at peace with God. Already we may cry out for the Gospel of good tidings to fallen man. Would that as we first sinned by one common representative, we might find another representative, in whose righteousness we might be made righteous! How evident the necessity, that since we were all born in sin, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!"²

How affecting, my brethren, is the sum of what has been said! How humbling to

¹ Hab. i. 13.

² John iii. 3.

reflect, that each of our souls was, by nature, fallen, sinful, dead, even before the commission of personal transgression. It was fallen from God's favour, out of covenant with him, very far gone from righteousness, destitute of the Holy Spirit's grace. It was sinful, being involved in Adam's sin, and having sinful propensities of its own. It was dead,—under a sentence of death, and under the power of death. Your body and soul, even in infancy, contained within themselves the principle of dissolution from each other: this is *natural* death; hence, even infants die. Your soul was already separate from God; this is *spiritual* death. And unless God deliver you in some gracious way, you could never, of yourself, return to God; you and he must be separate for ever: and what is that but *eternal* death? “The soul that sinneth, it shall die!”

And here I could gladly pause, to preach to you the glad tidings of salvation through Christ. Who of you does not already wish to escape from that state of danger, and to flee from the wrath to come? But our

subject is yet only half considered. We have seen the soul in danger by *nature* : we have yet to see it so also by *practice*. Come with me to this our *Second* point. The view, I am aware, is deeply humbling. But we shall come to fairer scenes and brighter prospects in due time. Would we ascend the lofty mountain, whence we may gaze with rapture on heaven in its glory and earth in its beauty, while, ever and anon, clouds roll, lightnings play, and thunders roar harmless beneath our feet, we must be content to descend, first, into the gloomy valley, and climb by that narrow path. No one, I believe, ever goes on solidly and safely in religion, who has not, through God's grace, a deep foundation-work laid in his soul, in a thorough heartfelt conviction of his fallen and guilty state both by nature and practice.

To this latter point we now turn. You have heard what Adam did with his soul, and for the souls of his posterity, in the responsible situation in which he stood. The question now arises, what have you

been doing for yourself with your own soul? You received it, I admitted, in a fallen state. But what efforts did you make to escape from that state? Even in early infancy, Christ encouraged your being brought to him. Even in infancy, prayers were offered for you by his church, that your soul might be regenerated by his Spirit, be washed in his blood, and receive the fullness of his Father's grace.¹ At the same time solemn promises were made for you, that you should repent, believe, obey, God's grace helping you. For that grace you were to pray. Parents, sponsors, friends, and ministers, were all to labour and pray for your Christian instruction. Whether they did their duty, is a solemn question for them. But your concern is with your own duty. You might have early sought life and grace for your poor soul. Our God will listen as kindly to the lisping child, as to the grey-headed old man, crying to him in the name of Christ. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he can perfect

¹ See the Baptismal Service.

praise.”¹ But was it so with you? How very few resemble the Baptist, who was sanctified from his birth! How few, like Timothy, have from their childhood known the Holy Scriptures! Even at that tender age, there was, with most of us, a wilful neglect of God, a perverseness of temper, a disobedience to parents, a love of falsehood, a selfishness of spirit. In all that there were the beginnings of actual sin.

Youth came; and with it came the growth of reason, the expansion of affection, the increase of opportunities, the training of the mind, the formation of character. But, with many of us, how sad to reflect, that at that season also, God had no place in our hearts! We began to understand other things, but not the things of God. We could love a parent, a brother, a friend, but not God. We grew in human wisdom, we cared nothing for the wisdom that cometh from above. We were trained for business, for society, for science, but not for heaven. Other principles were im-

¹ Psalm viii. 2.

planted and cultivated, but those which God offers in his word, as principles which would make us blessed in ourselves and a true blessing to others, and which would pass with us into eternity, were all utterly despised. And then, in how many cases, how various, how corrupt, how daring were the sins of youth! Are not public schools too commonly notorious for vice? Are not private schools often almost as bad? Who, that has passed through either, does not remember how prayer was ridiculed, God's name insulted, the Sabbath profaned? Who has not there seen and heard other things, calculated to pollute the heart? And was there no sin in such things? Read, young people, how David, Job, and Jeremiah speak of youthful sins. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions."¹ "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."² "I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."³ Oh think,

¹ Psalm xxv. 7.² Job xiii. 26.³ Jer. xxxi. 19.

I intreat you, with shame and sorrow, of many actual sins committed in your youth !

Are riper years come ? And yet how often have some still thought and acted, as though there were no God. How many have cause to confess with the poet Cowper, who thus wrote to a friend, " You think I always believed, and I thought so too ; but you were deceived, and so was I. I called myself indeed a Christian, but He who knows my heart knows that I never did a right thing, nor abstained from a wrong one, because I was so. But if I did either, it was under the influence of some other motive." ¹ How important that observation ! How true in our own case ! What we did that seemed right, was not done from love to God, and to please him. The bad things, from which we abstained, were not shunned because he forbade them. But some worldly motive, a regard to worldly interest, a dread of worldly consequences, this was our principle. Then, that principle, in God's sight, was defective : it was not the

¹ See Cowper's Letters.

motive proposed by him : it usurped the place of better motives : it could not please him. Then, neither could the actions which flowed from that principle. And thus our best actions were utterly defective ; our most splendid virtues were nothing but splendid sins ! “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”¹

And if so with our best deeds, what is to be thought of our worst ? Did you ever try to make a catalogue of your sins ? God has one in the book of his remembrance. Can you venture to attempt to form one for yourself ? Make the trial, I intreat you, although it may bring sorrow into the heart, and tears into the eyes. Take in private a blank paper. Write at the top of it the law of God : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Or, draw out the Saviour’s example under distinct heads. Or, add the ten commandments, and subdivide them into your duty toward God, and your duty toward your

¹ Isaiah lxiv. c.

neighbour. Then, under each commandment draw two lines, one for things you have done, which, according to that law, you ought not to have done; the other, for things you have left undone, which, according to that law, you ought to have done.

Then, with prayer to God for his Holy Spirit, that you may not wish to omit any sin, begin to put down a memorandum of your sins, of word, thought, and deed against that law.

Would you omit the bad thought? I dare not advise it. God does not. "The thought of foolishness is sin."¹ God's law is spiritual,² reaching to the spirit. The tenth commandment, which forbids to covet, gives a spiritual character to all the preceding commandments. Our Lord also, in his Sermon on the Mount, plainly declares, that an angry thought breaks the sixth commandment, and an impure desire breaks the seventh. And no wonder, for thoughts are the seeds of actions, and if the action is sinful, its root and principle must be sinful

¹ Prov. xxiv. 9.

² Rom. vii. 14.

also. Bad thoughts, then, together with idle words, foolish speeches, corrupt communications, and all sinful actions, must be faithfully put down in your catalogue of sins.

Though I advise this attempt, it is not because I think you can complete it. You will soon find the memory lost and overwhelmed in the effort. You will find more sins to be recorded, than you once thought could have been crowded into so short a space of time. You will sigh over the sad picture of yourself. You will be obliged to give up the attempt, and to write at the foot of the list: "My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart faileth me."¹ I would advise you to try, though it be with tremulous hand, to close the catalogue, with signing your name, as a solemn confession of its truth. Then, in a distinct line, add my text, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" And leave a space for yet

¹ Psalm xl. 12.

another sentence, which you perhaps can guess already, and, if not, I will tell it you hereafter.

What a picture^{is} is that before us of the state of danger, in which your soul has been, both by nature and practice ! It seemed as bad as it could be by nature, it appears yet worse by practice. For if Adam's one sin incurred death, what is to be thought of the guilt of your innumerable sins ? Surely, without the least exaggeration or over-statement, your guilt was infinite, for your sins were committed against Him who is infinite in goodness, and their number is beyond enumeration. What a state then was yours ! Your soul was, from the first, dead in trespasses and sins, under guilt, and with unholy propensities : and then, every period of your life has added sins of omission and of commission, without number, against every commandment of the law ; and every sin has deserved death !

We shall come in due time, as I promised, to brighter scenes. In the new state, which I shall have to describe, there is

change, motion, feeling, life. There will be a pleasing and delightful prospect. We shall behold mountains and valleys, rills of comfort, rivers of joy, trees of righteousness laden with golden fruits, fountains sparkling with living water, pastures ever verdant, and, above all, the Sun of Righteousness shining down health, warmth, and animation over the whole scene. But in your old, unconverted state, all was one dull course of cheerless uniformity; darkness brooded over the whole scene, it was the very region of the shadow of death. As you advanced in years, all became more and more gloomy:—the night thickened its horrors:—your treacherous guide led you on at a quicker step:—before you was a tremendous pit, which, ever and anon, sent up a lurid glare and a dismal shriek, though, it may be, you saw and heard it not.

Let me hope that you now see the fitness of the title of this discourse, *The soul in danger*. If you still doubt it, my appeal is to your Bible and your conscience. Even

if you have still doubts about my first part, and think that you have nothing to do with Adam's sin, can you escape from my second part? Can you satisfy God and your conscience, that you have never personally sinned? Then, yours undoubtedly has been *the soul in danger*. But I rather hope that you admit both parts, and that your anxious thought now is, How can I escape from that state of danger?

How indeed! Perhaps you will think with some, "God is too merciful to punish with eternal death." Be not deceived. God is as just, holy, and true, as he is merciful. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"¹ Was God too merciful to drown the old world? or to burn Sodom and Gomorrah? or to destroy Tyre, Babylon, Nineveh, and even his beloved city Jerusalem? Are not the Jews, scattered and peeled as they are, living monuments

¹ Numb. xxiii. 19.

in all nations, that God is just and righteous in fulfilling his threatenings on the disobedient? Is he too merciful to allow temporal death to continue its ravages among men? Is not generation after generation regularly swept off, according to the sentence passed six thousand years ago, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return?"¹ Then, who art thou, who, having dared to sin against God times without number, now expectest the law of his kingdom to be set aside, to the dishonour of his name, authority, and word, under the plea that he is too merciful to punish? True, he is merciful! But such mercy as many hope for, would be but another name for weakness. What think you of a king too good-natured ever to punish an offender? Would he not be a royal promoter of offences, a patron of thieves and murderers? Oh, rest not on that idle plea of a weak mercy in God, too soft to punish. It will not serve.

Then, what will you do? "I will make

¹ Gen. iii. 19.

up for my offences : I will reform myself : so will I blot out my sins." Poor soul, thou art talking of impossibilities. There is not one of those things which thou canst do. Go, move a mountain, fill up the ocean, pull down the stars from their spheres :—all will be as easy as what thou proposest for thyself. Thou canst not make up for thy offences. Thou canst not form thyself anew. Neither thy tears nor thy blood could blot out thy sins. Even if thou never sinnest again, in word, thought, or deed, it is thy duty that thou doest, and no more. It cannot make up for thy past sins. To pay the debt of to-day, does not pay the debt contracted yesterday. Would your debtor satisfy you, if he came and said, "I am sorry that I contracted that debt, I will add to it no more?" And is not the justice of God as high and sacred a thing, as equity between man and man?

Have you yet other pleas? Let me persuade you to drop all, and look to the *one* only plea proposed by God himself. For

while you are looking to vain confidences, your soul's danger continues unabated, yea, it increases every moment. Every breath you draw brings temporal death nearer. And as death finds, so will judgment and eternity.

Brethren, I have hesitated whether I ought not to leave the matter there. Having shown yours to be the soul which has been, or now is, *the soul in danger*, I have doubted whether I ought, in this sermon, to show you the way of escape. But I cannot, I must not omit it. It is true, we shall come in the next lecture to consider *the soul repenting*, and then *the soul believing*; but you need not be bound by the order of this course of sermons. You cannot safely delay the matter a single week. I must not be fettered with the law of critics, who would tell me that the gospel is not in my text. Then it ought to be in the sermon. If not in my text, it is in my Bible, and it ought to be sounded in your ears, and received into your hearts. That gospel you

shall find more at large in the subsequent lectures. But at present I declare thus much. My text says, "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*" Jesus Christ said, "Who-soever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."¹ He was the eternal Son of God, and yet from pity to lost sinners, he took on him a human soul and body. He kept that soul, as he received it, without spot or taint of sin, original or actual. He preserved that body a holy temple, ever undefiled. He was pure in heart, holy in life, a lamb without blemish and without spot. And yet he was crucified: on the ignominious cross he endured agony of body and of mind, and made his soul an offering for sin.² His divine origin gave a divine and infinite worth to such a life crowned with such a death. All was "for us men and for our salvation."³ And now, for his sake, through faith in his name, without works, yea, notwithstanding all your evil works, your soul may be freely forgiven, graciously accepted, fully justified

¹ John xi. 26.² Isaiah liii. 10.³ Nicene Creed.

before God. And thus yours may cease to be *the soul in danger*.

But there must be that faith, in simple, lively exercise. It is not the Christian name, baptism, or profession; it is not a notion of doctrine or a lip-service; it is only Jesus Christ, believed on with the heart, that can save your soul from that tremendous danger. To neglect Christ will be to neglect salvation. To refuse to believe in Christ will be to add to all your other sins the terrible sin of rejecting God's only method for saving thee; it is to dash away the cup, which contains the only balm that can heal the soul. Have ye not read, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned?"¹

And do you find believing in Christ difficult? Ask God, and he will make it easy. Is the heart too hard and stubborn to yield? Put it into God's hand, and entreat him to make it soft and pliant. But do not trifle with this solemn subject. Do not sport on

¹ Mark xvi. 16.

the margin of a precipice, at the foot of which a lake of fire rolls waves of fury. Think not the preacher severe, who has faithfully pointed out your danger. He would be well content to bear your momentary displeasure, if he may but be an instrument to save your soul. Oh, let not the impression of this sermon die from your memory, before you have gone humbly on your knees before God, and confessed the sin and guilt with which your conscience now stands charged. Then humbly seek reconciliation with God, through the atoning blood and righteousness of his Son, Jesus Christ. Have you so gone long ago? Then go again; renew your humiliation, again express faith, realize new joy and peace in believing.

Does one still cavil and object? Let others exhort and pray for that soul in danger. Does that soul still linger? Oh, be as the good angels to Lot, to lay hold upon his hand, and hasten him out of Sodom. Flee, sinner, for thy life! Holy Spirit, convince that soul of sin! Redeemer of

the world, have mercy upon that miserable sinner! Father of mercies, have pity upon every one of us, thy once prodigal and rebellious children! Save thou *the soul in danger!*

SERMON II.

THE SOUL REPENTING.

JOB XLII. 5, 6.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear : but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

SUCH was of old the language of a soul repenting. And this, you remember, was proposed as the second point of observation in which we would contemplate the soul. In the Introductory Lecture I had to show *the soul in danger*, both by nature and practice. You have now had a brief interval for reflection, self-examination, prayer, and the study of your Bible. Have you mastered the former subject, learned well the humbling lesson, become

thoroughly convinced that yours has been the soul in danger ?

Then, be not discouraged. To take one step well in religion paves the way for a second, and that for a third ; and every advancing step is a step farther from danger, and nearer to heaven. Be not afraid of our present topic. Its title, *The soul repenting*, may wear a forbidding aspect ; but, enter cordially and experimentally into its meaning, and, I think, you will find that there is a sweetness in true repentance, a pleasure in godly sorrow, a far purer satisfaction in weeping for sin, than ever was found in committing it.

But, in order to enter aright into such a subject, we must have the grace of God the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It was easy enough, without him, to have *the soul in danger*. It is impossible, without him, to have *the soul repenting*. Pray, then, for his grace. I pause, that every one may waft an ejaculation to the throne of grace, for the effectual blessing and inward presence of the Lord and Giver of spiritual life.

In describing the soul repenting, I would follow the order suggested by our text. "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear :*"—that describes many a soul which has not yet exercised a repenting spirit. "*But now mine eye seeth thee :*"—there is the humbling view which alone produces true repentance. "*Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes :*"—there is the soul in the full exercise of repentance, loathing itself with the deepest self-abasement.

"*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear :*"—that describes many a soul while a stranger to true repentance. Job had heard of God long before. We know indeed but little of his early history. The very time at which he lived is matter of uncertainty. There is every reason to think that he lived before Moses, in the patriarchal times. His own history and character furnish abundant proofs, that he must have heard much and often of God by the hearing of the ear. We find that he feared God, and eschewed evil ; that

he offered burnt-offerings; that he acknowledged God as the sovereign Lord, who gives and takes away at his pleasure. We find him knowing that his Redeemer liveth, and expressing a firm belief in his glorious advent, and in the resurrection of the body. We observe him tracing the dealings of Divine Providence, and attempting, though the subject was too wonderful for him, to fathom the counsels of the Most High. In order to all this, he must have heard much of God by the hearing of the ear. Possibly, from parents in early life he heard the sacred traditions respecting God, which were religiously handed down among the old fathers of mankind. Certainly, in conference with friends, from Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, he had again heard much. Whatever were the means of hearing of God by the ear, as at that time possessed by the church of God, Job, there is reason to think, had enjoyed and used them all. And yet all this had been insufficient. Though eminent for patience, he had fallen

into impatience. Though a believer in the Redeemer, he had given way to unbelief. Though one that feared God, and eschewed evil, yet, unable to bear up against strong temptation, he had cursed the day of his birth, complained of life, refused to confess sin, made a vain-glorious boast of his integrity, and impeached the goodness and justice of God in allowing him to suffer. This was his state ; and then his soul, whatever it had once been, was anew the soul in danger.

Brethren, there is no encouragement for us to continue in sin, because of the falls of good men. If David falls, he must begin afresh, repent anew, cry, like a poor sinner who had never repented before, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness ; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."¹ "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."² If Peter falls, he is not to presume, "Oh, I have been a believer, I can-

¹ Psal. li. 1,

² Psal. li. 10.

not finally fall away :”—he must go out and weep bitterly. If Job falls, his former hearing, profession, knowledge, are as nothing ; he must begin again, he must learn to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes. I urge this with earnestness. The doctrines of grace, which are the very glory of the gospel, must not be perverted into encouragements to licentiousness. Mistakes on this point are not uncommon. There are some who say to themselves, “ Oh, I have heard of God, I know the plan of salvation, I have correct views of divine truth, I have heard the most eminent ministers : surely I am not a babe in Christ : no need for me to be laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works.” But if your knowledge and hearing, with your profession and attainments, have not kept you from returning to sin, you have need to repent, quite as much as, perhaps more than, that poor sinner, who, for the first time, is smiting upon his breast and crying, “ God, be merciful to me a sinner !”¹

¹ Luke xviii. 13.

To all who would repent aright, I must say, It is not enough to have heard of God by the hearing of the ear. It is good, I grant, to have heard of him at all. We know that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."¹ We know that what the ear hears, may, through God's blessing, enlighten the mind, affect the conscience, penetrate the heart. Yet the mere hearing with the ear, in a vague, general way, is utterly insufficient. Yet how much is this the hearing given to the truth of God by many professed Christians! How long it was the case with some of us! You heard something of God in early life. Much as religious education was neglected in our youth, much as it is still neglected by many parents, you all, I suppose, heard something of God by education in childhood. Yet how slight was the impression upon many of our minds! What we heard with one ear escaped as at the other. Religion was an irksome subject. The Bible was thought a task-book. Prayer was

¹ Rom. x. 17.

either hurried over as a form, or, through sloth, indifference, or false shame, frequently omitted. We went to church, but paid no attention : we trifled, we gazed, we slept, we roved in imagination to the ends of the earth. We never seriously attempted to reduce to practice one thing that we heard from the Word of God. It might not be so with all. I am sure it was so with many. Does not many a conscience whisper, It was so with *me* !

You heard also of God in other ways, in the days of your impenitence and ignorance. I am not supposing you to have lived among heathens, although, even there, God has not left himself without witness.¹ You lived among nominal Christians, you had access to Christian books, you had the outward means of grace ; in many ways, in public and in private, you may have heard much of God by the hearing of the ear. Grievously as God is forgotten in the world, much as many called Christians are ashamed of Jesus Christ, especially of his cross and

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

of all the peculiar doctrines of his gospel, yet I am not obliged to suppose, that worldly-minded persons never hear any thing of God by the hearing of the ear. On the contrary, they may hear much. They may come to our churches, and hear lesson after lesson out of God's Word;¹ they may hear ministers set forth the character of God as revealed in Scripture: they may go farther; they may gain a correct theoretic knowledge of the only plan of salvation, so as to be able to talk of it fluently, and to argue for it vehemently:—and yet, they may have never felt the power of the divine word, been humbled by it in heart, been brought to repent truly before God. Religion may be with them the business of the ear which hears, and of the tongue which talks,—not yet of the

¹ It is worthy of remark, how much of Scripture is circulated by our church every Sunday to the hearing of the ear, throughout our land, and in distant parts of the world. In the Morning Service alone, the introductory sentences, the Lord's Prayer, Psalm xcv., the two or three psalms of the day, the two Lessons, Psalm c., or the Benedictus, the Epistle and Gospel, the Ten Commandments, and the preacher's text, are all *pure Scripture*! How great the responsibility of those who hear!

heart which feels, and of the soul which falls prostrate in self-abasement before the God who gave it.

My brethren, examine your own selves. Let each think, Has all my religion and my knowledge of God been but the hearing of the ear? Have I, like the Samaritans, been worshipping I know not what? like the Athenians, been building an altar to the unknown God? Have I talked of repentance, yet never repented? of faith, yet never believed? of good works, yet never performed one work from the only motives which God approves as good? If so, surely something, yea, much more is still needful to my soul!

May God show us this, while we consider, *Secondly*, the view of God which produces true repentance. "*But now mine eye seeth thee.*" Job cannot here mean that his bodily eye saw God. "No man hath seen God at any time."¹ He must then mean, that, with the eye of his soul, he had now gained such a view of God and

¹ John i. 18.

his perfections, as had humbled his soul into genuine repentance.

After Job had been hearing of God with the ear from his three friends, God himself, we are told, answered Job out of the whirlwind, and charged him with ignorance and imbecility. God tells him of the wonders of creation, and the mysteries of providence, leaving him to infer his greater ignorance of the system of God's moral government, and the mysteries of grace. God plainly charged him with pride of intellect, and with an attempt to intrude his petty reason into the peculiar province of the Deity. "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it."¹ Job felt the Divine rebuke, and answered in that memorable confession, "Behold, I am vile!"²

Then, as if the humbling impression were not yet deep enough, God follows up his expostulation, and, with close appeals to Job's conscience, sets before him the Divine

¹ Job xl. 2.

² Job xl. 4.

righteousness, power, majesty, and wisdom. He charges him with inability to justify or save himself: which if he thinks that he can do, God bids him to undertake the moral government of the world.¹ He sends him at last to learn the power and wisdom of his Maker, from the hippopotamus and the crocodile.² But here, it seems, Job could contain himself no longer. Such a view of the Divine majesty and glory filled his mind, that he was ashamed of the babblings of his ignorance, and confounded at his presumption: he confesses the pride of his objections; he acknowledges guilt; he owns the omnipotence and omniscience of God. "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not."³ Then mark how he supplicates: "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me."

¹ Job xl. 6—14. ² Job xl. 15, to end of xli. ³ Job xlii. 2, 3.

And then follows the penitential confession of our text : “ *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*”

It was thus, my brethren, that Job’s soul was led to repent. And so only can yours or mine be led. It is God speaking to us by his Word and Spirit; it is God revealing himself in his glorious perfections; it is, under our dispensation, the soul’s view of God, as seen and known in Jesus Christ :—this is what produces true repentance. How striking our Lord’s words, “He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.”¹ And Oh, my Christian hearers, if the view of God, as seen in creation, so humbled Job; if the view of God, as binding the sweet influences of Pleiades, loosing the bands of Orion, bringing forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guiding Arcturus with his sons, so amazed Job; if he learned the wisdom, goodness, and power of God, from the wild beast of the field and the fowl of the air; if the war-horse, pawing

¹ John xii. 45.

the ground and smelling the battle afar off; if behemoth and leviathan served to teach him such humbling lessons;—what say we to the view of God, presented to ourselves, amid the full blaze of the gospel dispensation?

Mark his *omniscience*. God knew the secrets of all hearts, the wants of every soul, the full requirements of the law, the utter insufficiency of man to save himself, when he gave Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of as many as, through grace, will be saved through Him. Infinite wisdom is displayed in every provision of the gospel, which is evidently designed for a creature fallen, sinful, guilty, helpless, and lost. It provides fully for the glory of every attribute of God, and also for every want of the soul of man.

Next mark the *holiness* of God as seen in Jesus Christ. It beams forth in many rays from that Sun of Righteousness. How infinitely holy was God, that no other way of access could be righteously opened for sinners to himself, but through his only-

begotten and well-beloved Son becoming a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief; and, at length, as man, suffering, wounded, bruised, and even dying upon the cross for our transgressions and iniquities! Surely, on that cross, the holiness of God is stamped in characters of blood. Often in spirit approach that cross, my fellow-sinners. When disposed to treat sin with levity, draw near by faith to that cross, reeking with sacred blood, and read there, and reflect, how evil a thing is sin! how holy is God!

You see again the holiness of God in the personal character of Jesus Christ. He is the model of human perfection. He knew no sin. He was pure in heart and life. It was his meat and drink to do his Father's will. He loved God with all his heart and soul, and his neighbour as himself. Attempts have, at various times, been made to fix on him some charge of sin; but all have failed, and have only served to manifest more clearly his sinless holiness. Although more than eighteen centuries have passed since

his birth, and although his character has been sifted and scrutinized, as that of no other man ever was, by Pharisees and Sadducees, by philosophers and sages, by infidels and atheists, by sects and parties, by friends and foes, yet, unto this day, no charge of sin was ever yet proved against him. His character stands alone among men. There is none equal or second thereto. All other men must stand afar off, and gaze with admiration, yea, rather, they must abase themselves at the contrast, and cry, How glorious is God ! how vile is man !

And do you not see the holiness of God in this also, that while the gospel of Christ offers you a full and free pardon, and an entire justification, yet it tells every soul among you, This is not, that you may continue in sin ? God forbid ! In order to this, you must be born again. You must have a new heart, a new spirit, a new life. “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”¹ But in acquiring this, God offers you through Christ the grace and strength of the Holy

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

Spirit, to encourage, sustain, and effectually enable.

Thus no man can gain a right view of God, as he proposes himself in the gospel, without having the thought continually pressed upon his soul, "God is infinitely holy, but I am altogether unholy."

Further, the *omnipotence* of God, which Job was instructed to discover in natural creation, we may see yet more distinctly in the manifestations of the gospel. What but omnipotence can break the hard heart, and turn the lion into a lamb? What but that can lead *you*, so weak a creature, through hosts of spiritual foes, conquering and to conquer? What inferior power could have originally established the church of Christ amid such fierce opposition? What else has preserved it till this day, so that the gates of hell have never yet prevailed against it? In every accession to that church, by the true conversion to God of another sinner, there is a fresh manifestation of the almighty power of God. Man loves sin so dearly, hates holiness so heartily, and is so

chained down to the world and vanity, that Omnipotence alone can effectually turn him to God, and holiness, and truth. “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works.”¹

What a delightful view, also, of the *goodness, mercy, and compassion* of God have we exhibited in the gospel of Jesus Christ! Job was sent to learn something of the beauty and glory of God, from the peacock spreading his rainbow wings to the sun. You may learn the same lesson far better, in the mild lustre, the holy beauty, the lovely harmony of the divine perfections, as seen in Him, who is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.² I said indeed, and I retract not the assertion, that the eye of faith may read, “*God is infinitely holy!*” in the cross of Christ; yet sure I am, that the eye of gratitude may read, if tears permit, “*God is love!*” as that sentiment shines forth, in characters of grace, from the same cross. Was it not love,—Christians, let me appeal

¹ Eph. ii. 10.

² Heb. i. 3.

to your best feelings,—was it not pity, mercy, love unparalleled, for God, against whom you had so sinned, to give his well-beloved Son to suffer, bleed, and die, for such as you, the just for the unjust, the sinless for the sinful, the pure, holy, obedient child Jesus, for the impure, polluted, disobedient rebel ?

And now reflect, my brethren, on even the poor view of God now presented,—a view so poor, that I am ashamed of it, and fear lest I may have depreciated what I honestly wish to magnify :—but my comfort is, that it is God himself, blessing my feeble words, and so magnifying himself in the weakness of the instrument employed, who is to give you right views of himself. Think then, and pray while you think, of God in Christ Jesus, as *omniscient, most holy, almighty, and all-gracious*. Be not satisfied to hear this with the hearing of the ear, but let the soul's eye see it. Then reflect, This, my soul, is the God with whom thou hast to do ! This is He, against whom thou hast sinned ! This is He, whose *wisdom* thou

hast impeached by thy proud reasonings ; whose *holiness* thou hast insulted by impure thoughts, corrupt desires, filthy conversation ; this is He, whose *power* thou hast defied by daring his vengeance ; this is He, —and Oh, my brethren, this to my mind is the most affecting of all considerations—whose *love and goodness* thou hast grieved, by refusing his grace, and disobeying his paternal will !

Brethren, do you see the God, with whom every one of your souls must have a solemn meeting ? Oh, do not hide yourselves from him ! It will not do. Every soul amongst you must go before the Being, whom I have imperfectly described ; and then and there every soul must answer for all the sin and rebellion of this present life. And now, God's eye is fixed upon your soul : —not, I believe, in anger ; though it well might be ;—but rather, with a father's pity and anxiety :—that look pleads, O sinner, with thy soul : God speaks to thy heart by that penetrating glance :—“ Is my character such as to deserve thy unkind thoughts

and rebellious treatment? what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.¹ Is there nothing in me to attract thy admiration, and produce compunction? Is the heart too hard to yield to the call of such a Father? Why wilt thou die? why not repent? why not believe in Christ and be saved? must I and thou be separated for eternity through thy folly and perverseness?"

My friends, ye ought now to be ready for our *Third* part. "*Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" There is the soul brought, in the full exercise of genuine repentance, to loathe itself before God. I know, brethren, how very humbling is that language. I am aware that young Christians sometimes honestly confess, that they cannot use such language regarding themselves. I am sensible that worldly people would think the man a fanatic, who should say that he abhorred himself. But when I consider who God is, against whom you and I have dared to sin,

¹ Mic. vi. 3.

times without number ; I am sure that no language can be too strong, to describe how we ought to look upon ourselves before him. Job said once, “ Behold, I am vile ! ” and here again, “ I abhor myself.” Isaiah used similar language, “ Woe is me, for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts ; ”¹—where you observe a like cause, the soul’s vision of God in his glory, produce a like effect, the deepest humiliation. Again, mark God’s own description, in Ezekiel, of the effects of true repentance : “ Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.”² The Psalms also, as you remember, abound with the most humiliating expressions of self-abhorrence for sin. Daniel’s language corresponds, “ O Lord, righteousness belongeth

¹ Isaiah vi. 5. ² Ezek. xxxvi. 31. See also xx. 43,
and vi. 9.

unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee.”¹ St. Paul likewise calls himself “the chief of sinners.”²

Such, brethren, were the expressions of humiliation, made by men, some of whom we often speak of as among the holiest and best of men. They spake of themselves as the worst. And they really meant what they said: such was their view of God, such their knowledge of themselves. What then are *we*? Have we no cause to abhor ourselves, to marvel at our pride, to stand amazed at our own image, as reflected in the faithful mirror of God’s Word? There!—God says to us, having first shown his own glorious character to our souls,—There! turn and see that creature-spirit, full of pride, perverseness, enmity, uncleanness! mark, how deeply it has revolted from its proper Lord, how thoroughly it is polluted, how presumptuous, how deceitful, how desperately wicked is that soul! what a sinful creature, how laden with iniquity,

¹ Dan. ix. 7, 8.

² 1 Tim. i. 15.

how prone to corrupt others!—and whose is that soul? Thy own, as God found it! that was thy true character! See thyself, as God sees thee, and learn to say with Job, “I abhor myself.”

Is that language still too humbling? Why! you *abhor* ingratitude:—your own soul has been very ungrateful to God. You *abhor* treachery:—you have betrayed the charge intrusted to your care, you have betrayed the interests of God, you have acted unfaithful part. You *abhor* falsehood:—yet, have you never professed to know God, yet in works denied him? You *abhor* a viper, and would start with horror if you saw one in your path:—yet you have cherished the viper, sin, in your own bosom. You *abhor* the sight, and almost the very mention of death:—and yet you seem to have loved death rather than life by indulging sin. Oh, what is there which is abhorred among men, which we may not individually find in what has been the temper, spirit, character of our own sinful soul?

“*And I repent,*” said Job, “*in dust and ashes.*” This was at that time the mode of expressing the deepest penitence. Outward forms and modes of expression change;—the inward principle is universally the same. It is not to the sackcloth on the loins, or the dust and ashes on the head, that God so looks, as to the broken and contrite heart. Having this, you will be neither proud in manner nor arrogant in speech. And if you have it not, then, no outward signs, no sorrowing looks, no tears, no mourning weeds, no dust and ashes, no humble speeches can prove you penitents indeed. How anxiously do I now ask, Have *you* the broken heart? is yours the contrite spirit? Yours was *the soul in danger*: is yours *the soul repenting*?

Does some soul inwardly answer, “Mine is not! my soul does not repent: I abhor not myself: this discourse has carried the matter too far?” *Sinner*, go, search the Word of God, and see whether these things are so. Find out for thyself the character of God as revealed by himself in the Bible.

Search also into thyself. Ask conscience to tell thee thy own character. Pray for the Holy Spirit to show thee God as He is in himself, and man as he is in thyself. Compare and contrast these two beings together, and ask, Are they at all alike? have they any moral resemblance to each other? how then can they have communion together throughout eternity? Sinner, when thou hast thus discovered something of the opposite characters of God and man, and art humbled at the discovery, I tell thee of Him, who was both God and man; who had all the perfections of Deity, and took on him all those of humanity, and came on earth, and lived and died as man, to reconcile thee to God. For his sake, and through faith in his name, thou mayst be freely justified. Then, love to him will sway thy heart. Thou wilt then long to be like him. His Spirit, who has created thee anew, will be thy gracious guide, comforter, and sanctifier. Sinner, wilt thou now repent and abhor thyself? Will not that be better than to reproach

thyself with wailing and gnashing of teeth in hell? Sinner, many of us mean to pray for thee this evening. May God soften thy hard heart, and give thee repentance unto life!

Penitents, humbled and abased in heart, let me speak to you a word of comfort. What I said in my former lecture I repeat now. You are not bound by the order of this course of sermons. You need not wait for the next lecture, before you allow the soul repenting to become *the soul believing*. Faith in Jesus Christ as your Saviour will improve and deepen, and not spoil or lessen your repentance. Take then that sorrowing soul to him, all pierced and broken, all bruised and bleeding as it is. He will not cast it out. He never did, he never will cast out any soul that would come unto God by him. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench."¹ Let the same Holy Spirit, who has so convinced you of sin, fulfil his other offices of leading you to Jesus,

¹ Matt. xii. 20.

making you truly his, comforting the heart, which his grace has broken. Say not, *Shall* I go back to God? but, “I WILL arise, and go to my father!”¹ With a soul in such danger, with such a God and Father, such a Saviour, so great a salvation offered, I cannot hesitate, I must, I will go: I will take with me words: I will say in secret to him who seeth in secret, Great and glorious God, pity a vile sinner! Lo! I bring thee a perverse heart, I lay before thee a gift which I myself abhor: yet look upon this loathsome thing; have compassion upon this guilty soul! Father, take it: Jesus, present it: cleanse it first in thy own blood, create it anew by thy Spirit, transform it, chasten it, do with it what thou wilt, only pity, pardon, save my poor soul!

Godly mourners, who have sorrowed for sin long ago, you hardly need to be reminded, that your repentance should become more deep and solid, more affectionate and hearty, as you grow in grace, and gain better views of God. Repentance begins

¹ Luke xv. 18.

before saving faith, yet is improved and deepened after it, and by it. Let us go, and in secret humble ourselves before God, thankfully acknowledging repentance as a gift, and earnestly praying for grace that we may bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Brethren, there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Has there been, shall there be, joy over you? When angels pause upon their golden harps, to make silence for music sweeter than their own, it is when the sorrowful sighing of a soul repenting ascends to the ear of God, through the mediation of Christ. Have you given them that joy? When Jesus, surrounded as he is with praises, and glorious in happiness, feels a new satisfaction thrill his sacred bosom, it is when he again sees of the travail of his soul, in another sinful soul repenting at the view of God, presented in his cross. Has he that satisfaction in you? Is yours, is mine, is every soul I am addressing, *the soul repenting*? I leave that question on your conscience.

SERMON III.

THE SOUL BELIEVING.

ROMANS X. 10.

With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

WE come this evening to a most important point in our brief history of a saved soul :—to a point so important, that I approach it with trembling, on account of the responsibility in which it will involve both preacher and hearers. We have traced how *the soul in danger* becomes *the soul repenting*. We have now to consider *the soul believing*. And this is the cardinal point of the whole series. Without an experimental understanding of our present

subject, no soul amongst you can be saved. Need I, then, claim your attention? May I not beg your prayers? May the God of all grace be pleased to make his word, however feebly spoken at this time, the instrument of giving and confirming the faith which saves the soul! Let us consider,

I. The righteousness required.

II. The heart receiving and appropriating that righteousness by faith. Consider,

I. The righteousness required. And here observe carefully, that the point of inquiry is not what is the righteousness required by the decencies of society, the opinion of the world, or the self-complacency of a man's own heart; but the question is, What will satisfy God? What righteousness is absolutely necessary in order to justification before God?

You have heard, in our first lecture, that man is very far gone from original righteousness, and that your actual sins of word, thought, and deed, have been personal transgressions of God's holy will. You have also heard that the "wages of sin is death;"

“the soul that sinneth it shall die.” The soul, thus separated from God by original and actual sin, is already dead in trespasses and sins. Every day also brings natural death nearer. And then, the soul, so long and so far separate from God, approaches him but for judgment, and after judgment to be driven from his presence into perpetual exile. This is eternal death. But how shall we escape? what is requisite in order to our acquittal in that day? *Righteousness* is needed! and that, not a partial or imperfect thing, but a righteousness complete in all its parts, full, perfect, and entire, without a particle of obedience wanting, without one spot, taint, or blemish, to mar its beauty. The righteousness, which is to procure your soul’s justification with God, must fully answer to all the demands of his law, understood in its spiritual meaning as well as in the letter. That law says, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” A righteousness which fully agrees

with that law, is what every soul must have to produce and plead, if ever justified. And in this no one can deceive God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."¹ The righteousness, which we must have to plead, must be such as will bear the strictest scrutiny which the eye of the Omniscient can give. Our title to it must be sound and valid. No merely nominal claim, no hypocritical pretence, no arrogant profession, will deceive God.

Now consider: have you such a righteousness in yourself and of your own? Is there one present self-righteous enough to imagine that he really has the righteousness described, all his own, consisting of his own merits, produced by his own strength? Have you never sinned, even in thought? never loved in heart what God disapproves? Yet this alone were enough to vitiate your whole goodness. For God's holy law requires entire conformity of heart to his will: it forbids even to covet with the heart.

¹ Heb. iv. 13.

And his truth is immutable. He will not set aside his law, falsify his word, and dishonour his perfections, in order to gratify human pride.

Not only would one corrupt thought be sufficient to prove that you have not the righteousness which God requires, but also one single omission of a commanded duty would produce the same result. To omit a plain duty is to commit a sin : it is the refusing to do what God commands. Then, if you have ever left undone the thing which you ought to have done, you are not personally righteous before God.

But, one sin of heart, or one sin of omission, has not sufficed. Sin has been seen by God breaking out in the actual life. He has heard sin in every idle, profane, false word : he has seen it in the wanton eye : he has traced it in the foot swift to do evil : he has observed the hand doing what it ought not ; your sins, in God's sight, are more in number than the hairs upon your head. Where then is your pretended righteousness ?

Perhaps you think that I forget your good deeds, your alms-giving, church-going, honesty, and other virtues. Those things are good and right in their place. But they are miserably out of place, if set up as a righteousness sufficient for your justification with God ; as well might you make a bridge of spiders' webs, in order to cross a foaming torrent, or a rope of sand wherewith to bind a strong man armed. If this is your policy, the men of Babel were as wise as you, when they tried to make a tower which should reach heaven. These good deeds do not set aside that one bad thought, nor make up for that one omitted duty. Nay, they are themselves defective, and require forgiveness. Are you startled at this ? Then only try them by God's Word. For instance, one of your good deeds, so called, is this : " I pay every one his due." And what does this mean ? Why, that, if a master, you defraud not your servant ; if a servant, you defraud not your master ; if a tradesman, you impose not on customers ; if you contract a debt, you duly

discharge it; though poor, it may be, yet you manage to pay your way. All this is good. Would that all professing Christians were as honest! The man is not a true Christian, who neglects all this. But here is your danger; lest this should be substituted for that righteousness, which alone answers the requirement of the law of God. Have you paid God his due? has he received from you his proper tribute of love, obedience, service? If not, believe me, you cannot be justified by having, as you say, paid every one his due. That plea, so defective as regards God, will also be found wanting as regards man, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. Thou owest to man a great debt of love. Thou shouldest have taught him in his ignorance, helped him in his distress, visited him in his affliction, loved him as thyself. Has it been so? Ask conscience: then, never open thy mouth again to plead before God, "*Not guilty*," when he charges thee with sin.

And so with all other pleas wherewith men attempt to justify themselves. They

are all leaky vessels, broken cisterns, and mere refuges of lies. To lean on them is to rest on the staff of a bruised reed.

Thus we have not found the righteousness required for your soul's justification with God. Will you borrow one from men? Alas! where will you find it? "There is none righteous, no, not one."¹ None can redeem his brother, or himself. The fall affected all mankind. Every individual, capable of actual sin, has personally transgressed against God.

Shall we seek a righteousness for our souls in the superabundant merit of departed saints? Seek it by all means, I would say, if there were such a thing to be found. But they were all sinners. Their best obedience was defective. Whatever Papists may fondly think, no saint in heaven has one atom of superabundant righteousness to spare, that it may be transferred to your account.

Then, will you try the angels? They are righteous, pure, and holy :—a gleam of

¹ Rom. iii. 10.

hope appears ;—lo ! it is no sooner seen than gone. Their righteousness, though sufficient to keep them in heaven, is not sufficient for any beside themselves. They do their duty, they cannot do more. Theirs also is angelic righteousness, which is distinct from that of man, which must be performed in man's nature, and according to what God requires of man. The Scripture is silent as death, when men call on angels to help them with their righteousness. It is as when the prophets of Baal called on their idol god, "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." ¹

My friends, the question is become very serious ; the case is truly urgent. You must have a righteousness for your soul's justification. You have none of your own. We have looked around us among living men, and could find none. We have tried departed saints and angels in heaven, but in vain. And yet you must have such a righteousness. Meanwhile, time speeds on ;

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 29.

life hangs but by a thread; death is approaching; and as death finds you, so will judgment. "Where the tree falleth, there it shall be."¹

Must then my guilty soul go before God, without a righteousness to offer, unjustified, and without hope? Is there no way of escape? what must I do? to whom must I look to be saved?

My fellow-sinner, the righteousness which your soul requires, God has himself provided, and offers for your acceptance in Jesus Christ, his own well-beloved and only-begotten Son. The fact is truly wonderful. He, whom we are taught to call Jesus Christ, was the eternal Son of God, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He was loved by the Father, and had glory with him before the foundation of the world.² He was with the Father when the world was made, and by him all things were made.³ Such, then, was his original and proper dignity, as the Son of God,—a dignity, observe, infinitely glorious, alto-

¹ Eccles. xi. 3. ² John xvii. 5, 24. ³ John i. 3.

gether perfect, eternal, and divine,—a dignity, which could not be destroyed or marred by any humiliation which the same divine person, in another form, might submit to undergo, while it would throw around that humiliation the radiance of its own glory, and the infinitude of its own merit.

Now, mark the word of God : This “ Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation,”—literally, emptied himself,—“ and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”¹ There is his humiliation ! He who was “ equal with God,” “ the Fellow of the Lord of hosts,”² became man, took upon him the form of a servant, obeyed and served God in human nature, and at length died upon the cross. Is there mystery in all this ? Yea, “ great is the mystery of godliness, God was mani-

¹ Phil. ii. 6—8.

² Zech. xiii. 7.

fest in the flesh.”¹ Wonderful and beyond all finite comprehension was the fact; infinite was the condescension of the Son of God becoming the son of man! But, remember, his humiliation as man does not take from his glory as God; yea, his glory as God gives an infinite value to his humiliation as man.

For this humiliation was also quite voluntary on his part. No other ever had it put to his choice, whether he would become man. “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.”² Accordingly, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”³ Thus his incarnation was voluntary for man, full of condescension, infinite in merit. “For us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven.”

This Saviour was perfectly righteous and holy, as man, from first to last. Being con-

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

² Heb. x. 9; Psalm xl. 7.

³ Gal. iv. 4, 5.

ceived by the Holy Ghost, he was exempt from all taint and infection of original sin. Surely the Holy Ghost could not be the author of an *unholy* nature! And did not the angel say expressly to Mary, "That *holy* thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God?"¹ How different that language from David's! how different from what we ought to confess, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."² Christ knew no sin.³ He was, from the very first, in heart as well as in life, a lamb without blemish and without spot.⁴

And so, throughout life, righteousness marked his character and conduct. He did love God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. It was his meat and drink to do his Father's will. His Father's glory was his ruling object; his Father's work his loved employ; his Father's house the place which his feet delighted to tread. Repeatedly did the Father give his express appro

¹ Luke i. 35.

² Psalm li. 5.

³ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁴ 1 Peter i. 19.

bation from heaven, to certify to men how well pleased he was with this his well-beloved Son. Christ loved too his neighbour as himself; and that with a love so disinterested, self-denying, and beneficent, as the world never saw before or since. Many injuries could not destroy, much coldness could not damp, cruel insults could not extinguish that love to man, which filled his sacred bosom. "He went about doing good"¹ to the world which treated him unkindly. Even when persecuted to the very death, and nailed to the cross, while his body was excruciated with pain, his ears wounded with taunts, and his eyes, looking around for sympathy, saw heads mocking with scorn;—even then, he felt no ill-will, he harboured no vengeance, he prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."² Thus was he righteous, full of love to God and man, in life and in death. His very enemies could prove no charge against him. His judge confessed that he could find no harm

¹ Acts x. 38.

² Luke xxiii. 34.

in him. The Roman centurion, who watched his cross, was forced to exclaim, "Certainly this was a righteous man!"¹

And as his life, so also his death, was altogether voluntary, and for the sake of men. Observe his own language on this point: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."² Thus he died voluntarily;—his Father's counsels, his own consent, the malicious motives of his enemies, and the necessities of our souls, were causes which worked together to produce the same end, namely, that he should die the death of the cross. And thus he died, not for himself. Death is the wages of sin; but he had done no sin. Death is the consequence of Adam's transgression, in which he had no share. "He suffered," we are expressly told, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."³

¹ Luke xxiii. 47.

² John x. 17, 18.

³ 1 Peter iii. 18.

His death has, in fact, the character of an atoning sacrifice. His original dignity as the Son of God gave infinite merit to this his voluntary death for men, as the Son of man. What other sacrifices could only do typically, his death did actually. It was the oblation of the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot, as a sacrifice for sins. It at once honoured the justice, holiness, and love of God; it magnified the divine perfections, it vindicated the rights of Deity, it conferred invaluable benefits on guilty men.

And thus, brethren, our inquiry is answered. We have found the pearl of great price. Here, in Christ Jesus, is the righteousness which your soul needs. All is prepared and made ready for your acceptance. Your joy in this discovery should be greater than that of Archimedes, when, on making a philosophical discovery, he ran through the streets of Syracuse, crying, *εὐρηκα, εὐρηκα*, "I have found it! I have found it!"

Yet, pause a little and think. You have found the pearl:—have you made it yours?

You have heard of a righteousness fully sufficient for your justification :—have you accepted it, as it is proposed, without doubting, wavering, or mental reservation ? You once thought much of your own righteousness :—are you convinced that you have none like Christ's ? It were a shame to compare them together :—*yours*, mere filthy rags, tattered, patched, stained ; *His*, a seamless robe, an entire garment, a mantle of salvation : *your* righteousness worse than worthless, *His* infinitely precious ; *yours* a leaky bark, in which if you attempt to sail, you must soon sink to rise no more ; *His* a gallant, noble vessel, in which you may safely ride over the waves of this troublesome world, and however tempest-tossed at times, yet at length reach joyfully the wished-for haven.

And this righteousness of Christ may be yours ! What an animating thought ! How ought it to stir up every sluggish soul ! If I offered you gold and silver, you would all awake to earnestness. If I read to you a will, which bequeathed to you an estate,

your eyes would sparkle with delight. If I pretended to tell your future fortunes for this world, you would be anxious to hear. If I came to you in prison, and offered the king's pardon, I should be a welcome messenger. But now, when I am commissioned to offer, in God's name, what is better for your soul than gold and silver, houses and lands, worldly good fortune, and the king's pardon; when I come to offer you the righteousness of Christ for your justification, and his unsearchable riches for your eternal portion, now, it may be, some soul heeds me not. Ah! that is still *the soul in danger*. And is it content to remain in that fearful state? Then, brethren, let that soul have no companion in perverseness. Let all others pity that soul, and pray for its conversion. But walk not with it in that dangerous road. "My friend," let me say to each of you, "your soul is too precious to be so thrown away."

We proceed to our *Second* part, which is to tell how the righteousness, shown you in our first part, may be appropriated, or made

yours :—BY YOUR SOUL'S FAITH. "*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*" The Scripture is very clear on this point. I beg your serious attention to the following texts in proof. Rom. iii. 20, 22 : " By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight : for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." Faith, you perceive, is the principle, which appropriates the righteousness which justifies. So again, Gal. ii. 16 : " Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law : for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Nothing surely can be more express to prove, that it is only by faith that men can be justified. So, also, when the gaoler at Philippi put

the great question, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer was, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."¹

These scriptures are so very clear, that I add but one more to prove that the righteousness of Christ is to be appropriated, or made yours, by faith: Phil. iii. 3, 9: "That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the *faith* of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by *faith*."

All these scriptures agree with one voice in declaring, that faith is the divinely appointed principle, by which your soul is to become savingly interested in the meritorious righteousness of Christ. This faith is a lively persuasion of the heart of the truth of God's word of promise made to us by Jesus Christ. It is simply the believing and acting upon what God says to us respecting the person, work, character, and office of Jesus Christ. In yet more simple terms, it is to

¹ Acts xvi. 31.

take God at his word. God says : Your soul is in danger ; but I have provided a way for your soul's escape. I have given my dear and only-begotten Son to become a child of suffering and a man of sorrows. I allowed him to be crucified for sinners. I could have sent legions of angels to his rescue, have rained down fire from heaven upon his foes, have made the earth open her mouth and swallow up his murderers, yea, I could have transformed his cross into a throne, and his crown of thorns into a royal diadem :—but he did not ask it : though I loved him so tenderly, I left him to suffer. And it was for you, sinners, that he might make an atonement sufficient to cover all your guilt, that his righteousness might be made available for your acceptance and justification. And now all I ask is, Believe this my love, accept this my Son as your Saviour ! Consent to be made righteous through faith in his name. And, is not this a method easy and pleasant for you ? why will ye not believe ? why will ye die ?

But, my friends, this faith must be the

lively persuasion of the heart. It is not the head which understands, the mind which assents, the tongue which says, "*I believe*," which will suffice to make you a true believer, personally interested in the righteousness of Christ. "*With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*" It is when the heart, humbled by God's grace, pierced with godly sorrow, and broken with deep contrition, yields to the recorded testimony of God as to the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, consents also to be saved entirely through him, and rejoices to rest upon his faithful promise; then it is that you have the faith which justifies and saves.

And this faith is the only principle, which can receive and appropriate the justifying righteousness of Christ. For this, though matter of solid fact, is warranted to us on testimony; and testimony is to be received on credit or by faith. That Christ was the Son of God, was miraculously born, lived righteously, died on the cross, rose again from the dead;—these are solid facts, substantiated by convincing testimony. So

the doctrines connected with those facts have the testimony of God to their truth, and are sealed and sanctioned by the testimony of many faithful witnesses. And to this testimony of God and his servants, conscience echoes from within. The offers of God in Christ Jesus appeal to your own conscience, even to your internal sense of guilt, which makes you shrink from God; they appeal to the moral wants and cravings of your nature; they propose a balm for that wounded spirit, a healing balsam for that bruised soul, a full and free pardon, yea, a complete justification for that guilty creature. And thus, these various *testimonies* all appeal to *faith*:—receive us, yield to our persuasion, act by our suggestion, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved.

This only method, though so simple, yet also exceedingly honours God. We can devise no other method which would not sully his glory. Would you still have him forgive and justify sinners without a sacrifice for sin? Then his law would have been

broken by you times without number, its threatenings would be made a dead letter, and his truth, justice, holiness, would be trampled under foot with impunity. Surely that cannot be. Would you have him give you salvation for your own goodness? And have you yet to learn, that you have none—nothing of your own which at all comes up to God's standard of moral goodness? Would you have that standard lowered to your level? That would be to ask God to call good evil, and evil good—to call darkness light, and light darkness! Would you have repentance made a passport for heaven? I ask, in reply, Can *human* justice suffer that? If a man commit murder, is the law satisfied with his repentance? If tears of contrition would efface the stain of blood, we should soon have abundance of murders, followed by abundance of repentance. Surely the justice of God is as full of majesty as that of man!

Have you yet other objections against the blessed doctrine of justification by faith only? Would you prefer to be rather jus-

tified, partly by yourselves, and partly by Christ? Oh when will you cease to flatter that proud thing called *self*? I entreat you to beware of that mistake of mingling your own works with Christ's in the matter of justification. That mistake has been for ages the millstone about the neck of the Romish Church. Again and again has that fond notion attempted to corrupt the Protestant churches from the simplicity that is in Christ. In our Church of England, though our articles, homilies, liturgy, and scriptures all testify against it, yet that mistaken notion,—the expression is too soft,—that fatal error, that we are to be justified, partly by Christ, and partly by ourselves, by our own works, merits, sufferings, repentance; has been, and still is frequently held, to the dishonour of Christ, and the ruin of souls. And what is its harm? say some. It is this: God offers you a full justification freely, through the alone merits of Christ, and invites you to receive it by faith, and be saved. Then you come to him and say, “Not so; I will not be jus-

tified in that way ; I have a way and a will of my own. I will be saved partly by my own merits, and will leave it to Christ to supply the deficiency.

Now that is presumption in its very essence. It impeaches the Divine wisdom, as though God did not know the best way of saving you ; it throws contempt on the Son of God, as if his Divine merits required something of yours to make them perfect or sufficient ; yea, it claims a worth for your works, which no works of yours can have. If that has been your trust, you have been under a most dangerous delusion. Search the Scriptures and see. Examine the texts which I have already brought forward. Find, if you can, those which set them aside. Believe me, nay, believe God who testifies to this weighty truth, that *Jesus Christ will be every thing to you in regard to justification, or he will be nothing.*

My friends, I have done, and let me hope that you have done with cavils and objections. Rather admire with me how the method of our being justified by faith

honours every attribute of God. How it manifests his holiness ! See, it says, the evil and malignity of sin ! Look, sinner, at that bleeding Lamb ! mark his agonies ! listen to his dying cries ! Your sin did that. Christ, the sinless and righteous Lord, must thus suffer, bleed, and die, or you could not have been saved. So holy is God !

Then, mark God's justice. His law said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Your soul has sinned. If you escape the second death, it is only because Christ, whom God, who is himself the Lawgiver, allows to be your substitute and surety, undertook your cause. He tasted death for you ; he bowed the head and gave up the ghost, that your soul might live. Is not the justice of God as fully vindicated, when a sinner's soul believes in Christ, and is forgiven for his sake, as when a sinner's soul, refusing to believe, is punished with everlasting destruction ?

And, further, is not the love of God gloriously proved by this Divine method of saving souls ? I more than doubt whether

any, who do not believe in Christ for their justification, have any right idea of the love of God. It is seen, indeed, in creation ; it beams forth in providence ; but it shines with a mild glory in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of God's own dear Son.

Lastly, this method of justification by faith is admirable, because it gives all the glory of salvation entirely to God through Christ. It excludes all boasting. If you are justified, it is entirely through God's mercy, Christ's merits, and the Holy Spirit's operation. Not a particle or atom of the praise belongs properly and strictly to yourself. It you are saved, it is only because of what Jesus Christ did and suffered for sinners.

“ Yes,” say some ; “ but is it no merit in me to be a believer ? All men have not faith. If I have brought myself to believe, surely that is a good work.” Ah ! there is *self* once again. Oh, how many forms has that Proteus, how many colours has that chameleon, how many heads has that hydra, *self* ! *You brought yourself to believe ! I*

must doubt whether you know what it is to believe. God only can have brought you. "Unto you it is *given* to believe."¹ "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."²

The truth is, to believe in Christ is both a duty and a privilege. Men are to be invited, exhorted, and entreated to believe. They are guilty for not believing, when God invites; they then become inexcusable; yea, the Saviour plainly declares, "He that believeth not shall be damned."³ Yet, when any do believe, they are to ascribe their faith not to themselves, but to the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, working faith into their hearts. It is he who blesses the word of truth, which men hear, and makes them willing to be saved in the day of Christ's power: he strengthens the weak hand of the trembling penitent, and enables him to take hold of the extended hand of the Saviour of the lost. Do you now believe? And was it not your duty to believe long ago? But you had then no heart to be-

¹ Phil. i. 29.² Eph. ii. 8.³ Mark xvi. 16.

lieve; you had only that evil heart of unbelief. Is that now quite gone, and have you, in its stead, the heart which simply, singly, affectionately believes on Jesus Christ for salvation? Then I am sure you will not refuse to glorify God and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."¹

Brethren, before we part, I have to propose so serious a question, that I tremble in putting it. Ask then yourselves individually, *Is mine the soul believing unto righteousness?*

If not, yours is still the soul in danger. Excuse it how you will, make light of it if you can, your soul, if not truly believing in Jesus Christ, is still the soul in danger. This is not matter of mere opinion, or doubtful disputation. You will find your Bible confirm my assertion, that, if not believing in Jesus Christ for righteousness, your soul is in imminent danger of eternal death. You must allow me to feel pity for your poor soul. Words cannot express what I ought

¹ Psalm cxv. 1.

to feel:—such a danger impends, such a salvation is proposed, such an eternity is balancing!

Methinks, I hear a whisper, “Then what am I to do?” “*Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ!” “And how can I do this?” Try: make the effort! “I have tried, but in vain.” I fear you were not then in right earnest. But try again: make a new effort: lose not the golden opportunity! Dost thou still feel inability? Ah, thou art learning a grand secret. Then, fall on thy knees, cry with tears to Jesus Christ; ask him to give, nourish, and increase faith: say, Lord, I do, I would believe; “help thou mine unbelief!”¹

But another *does* believe. Surely I am addressing some who are true believers. Happy are ye! Blessed is that mother’s child, who truly believes unto righteousness. From such I call for praise to God. I call thee, my fellow-believer, to know and own thy happy state:—no harsh exhortation that. Thou believest in Jesus Christ for

¹ Mark ix. 24.

righteousness ;—then, for his sake, thy sins and iniquities, though many and great, are freely forgiven, thou art accounted righteous, God has fully acquitted thee from all charges of the law, and adopted thee into the family of his dear children : thou mayest have peace in thine own conscience : angels have rejoiced over thee : all the faithful on earth hail thee as a brother in the Lord : Jesus himself sees in thee of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied : the Holy Spirit has chosen thy heart for his holy temple, his peaceful abode, his place of manifesting more and more of the glory of God, and the beauty of holiness. O thou believing penitent, thrice happy is thy portion ! Whether thou art rich or poor in this world, matters little ;—whether thou art going home to a splendid mansion, or a lowly cottage ;—whether about to repose this night on a bed of down, or on a heap of straw ;—whether young or old, healthy or sickly, infirm or strong ;—all this is of slight importance. I see in thee a true believer in Christ :—that is thy grand distinction ;—

then I see in thee a child of God, and an heir of glory!

I was about to add, Go and be thankful! But it is needless. Thy heart, if I understand a believer's heart, is full of thankfulness. I have no fears that a true believer will go hence to abuse this blessed doctrine. The hypocrite may; the false professor perhaps will: but thou, the true believer, wilt say with abhorrence, "God forbid! how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"¹ All I am and all I have, I owe to Christ. I am not my own. I am bought with a price. I must glorify God with my body and my spirit, which are his. "THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!"²

¹ Rom. vi. 2.

² 2 Cor. ix. 15.

SERMON IV.

THE SOUL IN CONFLICT.

ROMANS VII. 22—25.

*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man :
But I see another law in my members, warring against
the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to
the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched
man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of
this death ? I thank God through Jesus Christ our
Lord.*

How wonderful a thing, my brethren, is the soul of man ;—by first creation, of kindred with the holy angels and with God ; by the fall, debased in fleshly lusts and vile affections ! In what danger once, through original and actual sin ; and yet, for a long time, as insensible of danger, as the child sleeping on the edge of the precipice !

Brought at length, in a mysterious way, to repent and to acquiesce in the wondrous plan of salvation ; made, through grace, a true believer in the meritorious righteousness and death of Jesus Christ, and a real partaker of the glorious privileges procured for sinners by his mediation ;—there, arrived at that point, the soul, we might have thought, will know no more such strange vicissitudes ; all henceforth will be uniform joy and peace ; the vessel, having weathered such a storm, will sail on in smooth waters, till she reaches the wished-for haven.

But, my brethren, the case is not so. If you have indeed entered, by actual experience, on the former stages of the soul's history ; if yours, which once was *the soul in danger*, has also been *the soul repenting*, and *the soul believing* ; then, you must not shrink from our present subject, for, either now or hereafter, you must meet it in experience, and grapple with it in the Christian warfare ;—*yours* must be *the soul in conflict*. And that is our present subject ; and a difficult subject it is. It will

require all your attention, and all your prayers, to enable you to understand a subject, which so enters into the interior of the spiritual life. I confess I should despair of making it plain to any mind, did I not hope that the God of all grace will give us his kind, effectual aid, and enable us to understand spiritual things.

The words of the apostle, in our text, strikingly describe to us *the soul in conflict*. Consider,

I. The conflict itself.¹

II. The anxious cry for deliverance.²

III. The deliverance found.³

I. *The conflict itself* is thus described by the apostle, ver. 22, 23: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

The true believer is a new creature. It is through the Holy Spirit deeply convincing of sin, leading the burdened soul to Jesus Christ for pardon, and so first im-

¹ Rom. vii. 22, 23.

² Rom. vii. 24.

³ Rom. vii. 25.

planting and then nourishing true faith ;— it is only thus that any man with the heart believeth unto righteousness. And in this process, the Holy Spirit infuses a cordial hatred of sin, and a genuine desire after holiness, so that faith worketh by love,¹ the love of Christ constraineth² all who believe in him for justification.

And now, the believer has new views, new pleasures, and new pursuits. He has far other thoughts of God than once ; the world's vanities have lost their charm ; he lives to a new object, even to the glory of his God and Saviour, an object which once had no place in his concern. And whence this change ? Is it through his own wisdom and strength, or through man's persuasion and influence ? It is, brethren, only through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. He only can have softened the heart once hard as adamant, subdued the spirit once so proud and self-willed, turned the current of the affections once following the course of this world, and have

¹ Gal. v. 6.

² 2 Cor. v. 14.

produced this grand change in the whole character and life. The Scripture calls it a *regeneration*, and so it is, for there is a new nature, a new heart, a new spirit, and a new life. The Scripture calls it an *awakening* from sleep,¹ a spiritual *resurrection*,² the being *quickened* when dead in trespasses and sins;³ and although these expressions are the strongest which language can supply, they are not too strong to describe the grand reality of what takes place, when any of your souls are brought out of ignorance, worldliness, vanity, and a sinful course, into penitence, faith, love to God, adoption into his family, and the animating desire to live to his glory. If any of you understand it not, it is high time ye did, “*Ye must be born again.*”⁴

Thus, the true believer is a regenerate person. The apostle describes the new character of a child of God, when he says of himself, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” That description suits

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 34.

² Eph. v. 14.

³ Eph. ii. 1; Col. ii. 13.

⁴ John iii. 7.

no unregenerate person. The law of God is so holy, spiritual, and good, and so opposed to the bias of fallen man's corruptions, that the natural man cannot look up to the heart-searching God, and say, with sincerity and truth, "I delight in thy law, O God, after the inward man." On the contrary, he heartily hates that law, wishes it were less holy, or even that there were no law of God at all. Is it not so? When in your ungodly state, was there not a desire that the law of God did not thwart you, that there were no account to be given hereafter, that you might be left to live as you list? But, if there were no law, there were no God. For the law is the copy of God's will: if God is, he must have a will; if he is holy, his will, and therefore his law, must be holy. Perhaps, you thought it not, but in fact you used to wish, either that there were no God, or that he were an unholy being. Oh, what an atheist's wish in the former case! What a heathen's wish in the latter! In either case, how full of ignorance, presumption, and guilt! May

God, who knew it, forgive thee, for Christ's sake, that thought of thy heart !

This then, I maintain, that although there is in all men a natural conscience, which confesses a distinction between good and evil ; although there is in virtue a majesty, which often commands the respect even of the vicious ; yet there is nothing in an unregenerate soul, which corresponds with this principle of delighting in the law of God after the inward man. No, brethren, no : the charmer may charm never so wisely, but in vain ; the minstrel may exert his utmost skill, and pour forth strains sweet as the melodies of heaven, but there is no chord which vibrates to his touch, when he appeals to sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, in praise of the beauty of holiness and the loveliness of spiritual religion. Listen, for instance, to the sweet singer of Israel, and see whether any carnal heart rejoices to echo his sentiments : " I will delight myself in thy statutes." ¹ " Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors." ² " I

¹ Psalm cxix. 16.

² Psalm cxix. 24.

will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.”¹ “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”² “O how I love thy law ! it is my meditation all the day.”³ “I hate vain thoughts : but thy law do I love.”⁴ “Thy word is very pure : therefore thy servant loveth it.”⁵ The whole, in fact, of the 119th Psalm will furnish an invaluable test for self-examination on the question, Am I a true believer ? am I a child of God ? Job also speaks of his delight in the law of God : “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.”⁶ In Isaiah, God himself thus characterizes his believing people : “Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law.”⁷

The truth is, in working into the heart a godly sorrow for sin, and a lively faith in Christ, as the only atonement for sin, and the Lord our righteousness, the Holy Spirit gives such a sense of the evil and malignity

¹ Psalm cxix. 47.² Psalm cxix. 72.³ Psalm cxix. 97.⁴ Psalm cxix. 113.⁵ Psalm cxix. 140.⁶ Job xxiii. 12.⁷ Isaiah li. 7.

of sin, and such a perception of the goodness, holiness, and love of God, with such a constraining love to Christ, for having loved us even unto death, that, henceforth, a hatred of all sin, with a love to all holiness, springs up in every believing soul. And now, the light of holiness and truth is found to suit the renewed mind, just as the light of day suits the natural eye. Now, also, mere outward decency of conduct does not satisfy ; a partial reformation is felt to be insufficient ; the inward man longs after holiness, the hidden man of the heart delights itself in the law of God, the mainspring within of all that is lovely and of good report, is touched by a divine hand.

If there were no other principle left, and if none of the old leaven continued to work, the whole man would be entirely sanctified ; men on earth would be as the angels in heaven ; every individual believer would be completely, what he now is but partially, a living temple to the living God, filled with his glory, ever fervent with praise, radiant with the beauty of holiness.

“But,” says the apostle—and *his* experience was that of a true believer, if there ever was one on earth,—“*I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*” Here, you perceive, are some remains of the old, corrupt nature, lingering in the believer, and fearfully harassing his soul.

The apostle calls it “*another law*,” for indeed it is *another*, as contrary to the law of God, written in the believer’s heart, as darkness is to light, hell to heaven. It has another author, and comes from another source. The principle of delighting in holiness comes from God the Father, through Christ’s mediation, by the operation of his new-creating Spirit. The law of sin comes from our connexion with fallen Adam, and is worked upon by the evil spirit. It is also another law in its effects. The new principle produces peace, satisfaction, cheerfulness, delight; the tendency of the old principle is to produce discomfort, remorse, shame, and death.

The apostle also calls it "*a law in my members,*" because the law of sin employs the bodily members as its instruments, and through them peculiarly tempts. Thus, in chapter vi. 13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin : but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." So in verse 19 of the same chapter: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh : for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity ; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." These exhortations every true believer desires to obey ; otherwise, he would not delight in the law of God after the inward man. And yet he finds another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind. The old, corrupt, carnal nature, which once ruled the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, and led him its willing slave, still lingers in the bodily members, works on the animal nature, and has influence with the appetites

and passions, and thus tempts the soul, which, being as yet only partially renewed, is too ready to listen to the tempter. And yet this must not be : the soul's better principles forbid :—then there must be strife and conflict.

And this the apostle calls a *war*. The term is most expressive. It is the old nature at war with the new,—the flesh with the spirit, the law in the members with the law in the mind. As in other wars, so in this, there is a *declaration* of war. When you become a true believer, and yield yourself unto God, in so doing, you formally declare war against sin in all its forms ; and sin, at the same time, declares war against you. Just as the Roman ambassador at Carthage, before the second Punic war, told the senate, “ We bring you war and peace ; take which you please.”¹ So we are ambassadors for God, and have to offer you war or peace,—war with sin, and peace with God ; or war with God, and peace, if so it may be called, with sin. Take which you please !

¹ Liv. l. 21, c. 18.

War then against sin is declared by every faithful Christian among you. And lo! as in other wars, *allies* hasten to range themselves on either side. On the side of the law in the members, are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world says, "I will bring pomps and vanities to allure, hosts of dangers to deter, honours to dazzle; I will command multitudes to countenance the law of sin by their example. "Come on, comrades," says the world, "let us fight merrily against saintliness; I will furnish the gold and the silver, which are the very sinews of war: pleasure and gaiety are with us; while the world standeth, I will never forsake thee, with whom I have been in alliance ever since the days of Adam."

The flesh also says to the law of sin, "Why, surely you and I are old friends; you, the members, are my own by birth-right ever since original sin was introduced. I will join the fray. I will supply lusts, feed appetite, nourish sensuality, and so keep the struggle alive! we will fight desperately; if you, the law of sin, are van-

quished, I shall be mortified indeed ; if you conquer, I triumph."

The devil needs no invitation to bring him to take part in the contest. "I shall lose my prey!" he says; and presently he comes with all the wiles and stratagems of a crafty general. Sometimes he bids the law in the members feign defeat, only to have time to rally forces. Now and then, he patches up a hollow peace, only to throw the inward man off his guard. When forced to open fight, which he does not love,—for with all his might and all his blustering, he is a coward,¹—then, he aids with fiery darts and panic fears; if he can reach the soul in an unguarded point, he would gladly slay it. Oh, what a confederacy, brethren, is formed against every faithful soul! We are called to wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.²

¹ James iv. 7. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

² Eph. vi. 12.

But are there no allies for the inward man? Yes: all true believers on earth are with your soul in this holy conflict. Their prayers, examples, sympathies, are all with you. The redeemed spirits in glory hear with joy of your repentance, and with renewed joy of your perseverance amid many a great fight of afflictions. The holy angels look on with affectionate interest; they love, in ways unseen by mortal eye, to come at their Lord's bidding, and minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.¹ Jesus himself, the Captain of our salvation, leads you on in this glorious warfare. His example speaks, his voice animates; his Spirit enters your hearts to sustain, revive, encourage; he points to the blood-stained banner of his cross; he shows its motto, in effect the same with that, seen—whether with the bodily or mental eye, I say not—by Constantine of old: “Through this cross thou shalt conquer;”² yea, he promises, that you shall be more than conquerors through himself who has loved you. His

¹ Heb. i. 14.

² “In hoc signo vinces.”

Divine Father and the Holy Spirit are also your soul's allies; the Father, to smile encouragement upon his agitated child; the Holy Spirit, to strengthen with might in the inner man. Believers, were you alarmed at the array of foes confederated against your souls? Were you ready to say with the servant of Elisha, "Alas! my master, how shall we do?" Open now the eyes of faith: behold the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about you. "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."¹

Do you want armour? It is amply supplied by the Lord of Hosts. You have it all ready for use, on the right hand and on the left, armour both for offensive and defensive warfare. You have the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the greaves of the preparation of the gospel of peace: you have the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.²

Such, then, are the allies on both sides,

¹ 2 Kings vi. 16.

² Eph. vi. 14, 17.

such the foes arranged against each other. And thus the strife begins. The battle-field is the world. The day of battle is every day in which you live up to your Christian principles. The war you wage against sin is to terminate only with this life; when you draw the sword, you are to fling away the scabbard. What conflicts ensue! Both sides fight desperately, for existence, for liberty, for mastery. Which shall reign over you?—there is the question. The apostle says that he had sometimes to see the worse cause partially triumphant. I see it, he says, “bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” This will invariably be the case, if your inward man faints, desponds, or at all yields, so that you begin to give way to vain confidence, worldliness, or lust. Then you will be, so far, again brought into captivity to the law of sin, which is in your members. And then, expect no clemency from your victor, sin; it will bind you as a slave, and drag you at its chariot wheels; it will expose you to the scoff of enemies, and the

pity of friends ; it will hurry you on toward death.

Brethren, you see the conflict. You behold the scales of victory inclining in favour of the law of sin. The case is one of real danger. The inward man is yielding ; your soul, which had tasted that the Lord is gracious, is returning to folly ; some fleshly lust is revived ; some sinful temper is again indulged ;—and, although God's promises are true, faithful, immutable ; yet, in that position of things, your interest in them is obscured : your soul is, to all human appearances, becoming once again the soul in danger. If I could tell you that there is then no danger, I should be unfaithful to your soul. No danger, when a believer is returning to sin ! It was not thus that Nathan comforted David. This was not the meaning of Christ looking upon Peter. Such was not the language of God by Ezekiel : “ When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them ; for his iniquity

that he hath done shall he die.”¹ No danger in backsliding from God! Oh, where do men pick up this Antinomian notion? Not surely from our text.

For, come to our *Second* part, and hear *the anxious cry for deliverance*. “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” I hardly know a more sorrowful cry than that. The Saviour’s cry seems indeed more sorrowful; “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”² And yet I hardly know. “*My God, my God,*” expresses some sense of sonship, some confidence of filial love, even in that hour of darkness and desertion. But the apostle’s words seem *all sorrow*, the language of a heart quite full of lamentation, and mourning, and woe. Only hear them again, and judge; “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” This last expression is most remarkable. The allusion is almost too painful for explanation. Yet, if its explanation may lead us to loathe and abhor sin, we

¹ Ezek. xviii. 26.

² Matt. xxvii. 46.

must not yield to a false delicacy. It is said that ancient tyrants, in their inhuman cruelty, sometimes condemned offenders to have a dead body tied to them, and to carry this loathsome object about with them. Can any thing more horrible be imagined? Yet such is sin working in our members! It is a vile and disgusting thing to us; if we are believers, it has received its death-blow: “knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”¹ Thus the body of sin, mortified by the Spirit of God and the cross of Christ, is henceforth a body of death, vile, loathsome, abominable; and yet it cleaves to us, hangs about us, impedes our progress, mars our comfort, torments, harasses, and grieves. Again and again we are forced to cry out, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*”

Yes: who indeed shall deliver us? we cannot deliver ourselves; for the enemy is part and portion of ourselves. Anselm,

¹ Rom. vi. 6.

one of the Fathers of the church, frames this excellent petition on this very text: "Lord, deliver me from this wretched man, myself!"¹ Neither can our fellow-men deliver us; the ungodly are all serving the law of sin, the very foe with whom we have to fight. Every one of the faithful has a similar body of death, wherewith to struggle for himself. He must first be the physician to heal himself.

But, my fellow-soldiers in this warfare, you *must* find a deliverer or perish. Your former believing will not serve, unless you still have one to believe in, whose power and love are equal to this emergency. Your former victories are lost, if you are vanquished now. That body of sin will revive to strength, and will rise and slay you, unless a deliverer can be found for you. Oh, is there one? who and where is he? who shall deliver me? It is the cry of one panting for breath, in the midst of conflict, almost overcome, looking this way and that for a deliverer.

Brethren, I know of no human philoso-

¹ Domine, libera me a misero isto homine meipso.

phy, which can give effectual aid at such a crisis. Philosophers never understood this conflict. They talk indeed of a strife and opposition within the breast of man. A heathen poet could say, "I see and approve of what is better, I follow what is worse."¹ And many have confounded this with the Christian conflict. But it is not the same. The inward opposition, which the unregenerate feel, is between worldly prudence and appetite, between one lust and another, between ambition and sensuality, between the judgment and the inclination. Hence even Herod felt a struggle between his fear of men bidding him observe his rash oath and behead John, and his natural sense of justice bidding him forbear the murderous deed. Hence Pilate had a struggle between his wish to release Jesus, and his cowardice prompting him to give him up to the Jews. Hence Felix trembled, and yet delayed repentance. All this is not the Christian's conflict. It wants this important mark—In the believer, the conflict is between grace

¹ *Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.*

and sin, between the regenerate and the unregenerate nature, between the new and the old man. In him the inward man sides with God and holiness. In the unregenerate, the inward man sides with the old man, and the conflict is between different natural principles which jar and quarrel with each other; just as bad men, living in the same house or neighbourhood, all agree in hating God and persecuting righteousness, and yet continually fall out and fight with each other. The regenerate, in short, fears above all things to return to sin: the unregenerate secretly means it, and soon contrives it.

This distinction, brethren, is most important. The unconverted often abuse our present subject, and mistake the compunctions, which they feel in the morning, on account of the follies, I mean, the sins of the last night, for the conflict which St. Paul describes between the flesh and the spirit. But St. Paul meant no such thing. St. Paul would have plainly told them, in his faithful way, "You are all flesh, altoge-

ther carnal, quite destitute of the Spirit. The works of the flesh are manifest;¹—and those are your works. Your conflict, at best, is only between natural conscience and sensual appetite. You are sorry, but not with a godly sorrow. You are afraid of the world knowing it, or of its ruining your health, character, property: you do not loathe your sin as a vile thing before God, nor yourself for having committed it. You, the drunkard, will be at your cups before night. You, the unclean person, will return again to your old practices. You, the slanderer, will set out again on your old round with some new tale of malice. You, the bad child, so very sorry when detected, and so full of promises of never doing so again, have no real intention of becoming the dutiful, obedient, good child. None among you, all ye unregenerate people, really desire to be delivered from your sin.”

But thou, truly wretched man, thou believer, with thy soul in conflict, thy contest

¹ Gal. v. 19.

is between that new heart which loves God, and that old nature which would have thee return to sin, between indwelling grace and indwelling corruption. Thou hast seen the abominable nature of sin, and therefore thou loathest it. And to find it still with thee, working to regain dominion;—this makes thee cry with a bitter, piercing, sorrowful cry, “*O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*”

III. But see, a deliverer appears!—“Wretched man,” he cries, “I bring thee good tidings.” Tempted believer, thy own heart will recognize his voice. “*I thank God,*” cries the apostle, “*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

Jesus Christ is indeed a deliverer at such a time. He left you to yourself for a little, to show you your own weakness, to humble all spiritual pride, to make you feel that if the best of saints without him is liable to relapse into the worst of sins, how much more one who is less than the least of all saints. And then, when your treadings had well nigh slipped, he comes, in answer to

your earnest cry, and brings his fulness of grace and strength to bear upon your case of weakness and distress. Oh, it is delightful to realize his help at such an hour. You cried, "Who shall deliver me?" Your question is answered. "I will deliver thee. Am I not *Jesus*, the Saviour and deliverer, by office and choice, by promise and profession? Am I not *Christ*, the anointed of God to guide, save, and defend? am I not *the Lord*, your Lord and your God? is any thing too hard, any case too difficult, any foe too mighty for the Lord?"

1. Jesus Christ succours at such times commonly by *his word and Spirit*. He thus revives faith, strengthens hope, reanimates the inward man, emboldens the faint heart anew, and nerves the weary hand with fresh courage. It is thus he enables you in conflict to put forth new vigour, and to gain victories over your corruptions. Christ does not comfort by telling you to become careless and presumptuous. He never delivers by bidding you to think, It is all of no use. But he comforts by his word of forgiveness

for what is past, even for all your shortcomings, faintness, unbelieving doubts, or even actual falls. He raises with tenderness and grace : “ See, I forgive all ! Behold the wounds of thy Captain ; they were caused by the blow which would have slain thee. My blood has flowed in this warfare. For *my* sake, because I fainted not, the King pardons thee. And now, rise with new energy ; be moved by my example, aroused by my voice, animated by my Spirit. Go, renew the fight ! I will be with thee. Victory shall be thine ! ”

2. Christ specially delivers by giving such *a view of his cross* as serves again to mortify sin, Dear brethren, nothing but that will slay corruption. But, if believers indeed, he will give you such nearer and more affecting views of his cross and passion, of his precious death and burial, of his glorious resurrection and ascension, as shall mortify the law of sin in your members, enable you to die daily unto sin, to be buried with Christ by baptism, to rise to righteousness and holiness, and to ascend in heart to hea-

venly things. Oh, keep but near to Christ crucified. Make his cross your trust, your plea, your pattern, your glory, and “sin shall not have dominion over you!”¹

Lastly, Jesus Christ helps and delivers his people in conflict by the nearer prospect of *the rest of heaven*. How often have generals animated their soldiers with the hope of soon seeing their peaceful homes, their fathers, brothers, sisters, friends, all anxiously waiting to congratulate them on their victory. Think, O tried believers, of your eternal home, to which Jesus, your Captain, will soon conduct your souls, and in due time your bodies also. You have a Father there, the most gentle, gracious, and affectionate, that ever bore that name of love. You have brothers there and sisters also, even all that ever lived who, through grace, repented of sin, believed in Christ, and fought the good fight. You have friends there, whom you have never seen in the flesh, but who long to see you with them in that pleasant land. And there,

¹ Rom. vi. 14.

they are all so loving, so pure, so gentle, and so gracious; they are all of such kindred minds and congenial spirits; they will all welcome you so gladly, telling you their gracious history, and listening to yours, and adoring with you your common Saviour;—that the very thought of that happy meeting, in that land of peace, should reanimate the most fainting among you, to go on praying, believing, wrestling, with holy perseverance, till his or her turn to enter into rest shall in due order come.

And then, NO MORE CONFLICT! Ye angels, write that upon the jasper walls! Spirits of the just made perfect, chaunt that with your golden harps! Ye that are to wear garments made white in the blood of the Lamb, and to carry palm-branches in your hand, anticipate that song now. There shall be no more conflict! There is no war in heaven now! Flesh and blood, in their present state, shall not enter there! No law in the members shall militate against the law of the mind there! No evil world, no crafty tempter there! Blessed, my bre-

thren, whatever our selfish, ignorant minds may sometimes object, thrice "blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord."¹

My friends, before we separate, I should have liked to have asked of every one of you one question ; but I feel that God only can put that question aright :—Have you understood our subject ? Has yours ever been the *soul in conflict* ?

I have endeavoured to show the unregenerate the great distinction between their inward struggles with different natural principles, and the conflict in the believer betwixt grace and sin. Have ye understood these things ? Sinner, careless hearer, thou hast not. It may be, that natural feeling prompted thee to pity the apostle forced to cry out, "*O wretched man that I am !*" yet if he was wretched in understanding, thou art much more wretched in not understanding this spiritual warfare. The apostle is now the happy man. His cry would now be, *O blessed man that I am !* how gloriously has Christ delivered me ! But thou,

¹ Rev. xiv. 13.

sinner,—nay, stop not thine ears,—thou wilt be a wretched man for eternity, except thou repentest. Sinner, go and begin. Repent with godly sorrow. Go with a penitent heart to Jesus Christ. Believe with the heart unto righteousness. If you would not last week, oh, do it now. Next week, you may be gone. Seek a new heart and a right spirit : act up to your convictions : forsake bad companions : give up known sin : pray, as you never did before, against temptation. Sinner, thus begin ; and I doubt not but you will soon have occasion to understand what is meant by *the soul in conflict*.

Believers, you have all understood me. You are veterans, or, at least, tiros, in this warfare. Will ye not, after this, persevere and press forward in the strength of Christ, the tiro to become a veteran, the veteran to become a conqueror resting in his glory ? Oh, be ye thankful. I feel that I have not said enough on that word of the apostle's, "*I thank God ;*"—and I cannot. Let your gratitude to Christ supply my omissions

Were I to speak for hours, I could not fully show your cause for thankfulness. Be thankful through life for every deliverance in conflict and temptation. Be thankful in death for such a deliverer from the last enemy. Be thankful, throughout eternity, to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON V.

THE SOUL DEVOTED.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 13.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

THIS seems a great speech for him whom we recently heard exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yet this our text contains a true saying, and has a close connexion with that distressing cry. For though we saw the believer's soul weak, and in conflict, we also saw him finding and rejoicing in a deliverer, mighty to save, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, then, the deliverer found! Behold him come with

his very present help ! Now, O believer, what canst thou do ? “*I can do all things,*” meekly answers the apostle, “*through Christ which strengtheneth me.*”

Let us, dear brethren, in pursuance of the plan of this little course of sermons, hence consider,

I. The soul devoted to all holy service.

II. The soul’s strength for that devotedness.

For this appears, on the whole, the most appropriate of the many topics in relation to the soul’s history, which still invite our consideration. It is, after all, only a general sketch, and a mere specimen of that history, which can be given within the limits of six discourses. At each point, I have endeavoured to keep to things essential to be understood by every saved soul. Of this character is the subject before us. If, through God’s grace, you are practically acquainted with our former topics ; if yours, which was *the soul in danger*, has experimentally understood *repentance, faith, conflict*, you will proceed, without reluctance, to understand the devoted service,

the full and prompt obedience, the cheerful consecration of all your energies to God, to which your Saviour calls you!—and this, not in your own strength, which is perfect weakness, but in and through the supply of his own enabling grace.

And may He, without whom we can do nothing, and who, I humbly hope, has been with us in considering our former topics, mercifully grant that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same!

Every true believer in Christ cheerfully yields himself unto God, as Christ's purchased possession, to be henceforth employed by God in holy services for his own glory. The Scripture often declares this. "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's;"¹ "Whose I am, and whom I serve."² "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

² Acts xxvii. 23.

a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”¹ “Ye are Christ’s.”² “Yield yourselves unto God.”³

And this surrender of ourselves to God is our bounden duty. If by serving sin, vanity, and the world, we had incurred great guilt, and were in imminent danger of eternal death; and if Christ voluntarily delivered us, at the expense of his own sacred blood; if the Father has manifested such wondrous love toward us miserable sinners; if the Holy Spirit has deigned to enter our hearts and apply this great grace; then, the least return we can make is to give ourselves up to Christ, and cheerfully to say, Here I am! Behold, Lord, the soul which thou claimest for thyself. It is indeed utterly unworthy of thy acceptance: in itself it is full of guilt, misery, and pollution. But thou who didst die for sinners, hast called, and I have come to thee to be justified through thy merits, and now to give myself to thee. Lord, I am thine, for

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

² 1 Cor. iii. 23.

³ Rom. vi. 13.

thou art mine. Fit and prepare my soul for thy service : make me all thou wouldst have me to be : use me in what way thou wilt : command me to what services thou pleasest : do with me, that is, with thy own, whatever seemeth thee good !

And this our duty is also our privilege. For, if we give not ourselves thus to God, we still serve sin, Satan, and the world ; we are still in bondage through fear of death ; we are employed in vile work, and occupied with mean pursuits. Hence it is a privilege to come out from the world, and to taste the liberty wherewith the Son of God emancipates the soul. It is a joy for the heart, after being so long enthralled, to find its proper master, “ whose service is perfect freedom.” It is an honour, which humbles while it exalts, to be allowed to serve the glorious and ever blessed God. That he will deign to employ such weak and worthless instruments ; that he, who could do so well without us, will give us work to do for him ; and that he makes us, who were once so ill disposed for serving

him, now quite glad to obey his will :—this is a privilege indeed ! For his commandments, brethren, are not grievous when we love God.¹ Christ's yoke is easy, for it is lined with his own love. “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.”²

Brethren, if believers, you have thus given yourself, body, soul, and spirit, to Jesus Christ. For with the soul the body is to go also. The law in your members will oppose, as we saw in our last lecture, but the soul, we also saw, is not to yield, but to endure conflict, and to cry out for deliverance, rather than yield to sin. With bad men the body rules the soul : when Christ makes any free, the soul regains its proper superiority and rules the body. Thus, if true believers, you have given the whole man to Christ. There has then been a time in your history, when you solemnly devoted yourself to God. You have often renewed that serious act. Young people, if you understood what you were about, you did this

¹ 1 John v. 3.

² Psalm cxix. 2.

at your Confirmation. Communicants, if ye mean what ye say, ye do this anew every time ye receive the Lord's Supper. Else, what mean our words, "Here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee?" Churchmen, if such indeed, ye do this every time you join in the General Thanksgiving. For do we not pray, "that we may show forth thy praise," O our God, "by giving up ourselves to thy service?" Christians, if ye have any scriptural right to that honoured name, your daily prayers and lives are my witnesses, that ye have given yourselves to God.

And now, what are the things to which you, thus given to Christ, are or may be called? Look first at the context, verses 11, 12: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer

need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me !”

This, then, is a primary duty of every one who belongs to Christ, to be content with the allotments of God’s providence, to exercise the graces suitable for prosperity or adversity.

It is not superfluous to speak a word on this duty. For ours is a discontented world. Even professing Christians are too often a murmuring, fretful, dissatisfied people. I speak not of their complaints of indwelling sin, nor of their dissatisfaction with their slow progress in divine things. I speak of their being too much like the children of this world, over anxious for the things of time and sense, careful and troubled about many things, too often peevish, restless, covetous, even as others.

But, brethren, if genuine believers, it must not be so with you. In giving yourselves up to Christ, you leave all your outward circumstances to his divine will. You then seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and you depend on him to

fulfil his own promise, that all these things, food, raiment, necessities for this life, shall be added unto you.¹ You will still use diligence, prudence, activity, in worldly duties ; but you will cheerfully leave the measure of your worldly prosperity with God. Does he prosper you in worldly things ? You will know how to abound ;—which is no easy thing ;—how to use abundance with holy moderation, to be temperate in all things, to employ wealth, influence, station, not to gratify pride and ostentation, but as faithful stewards for Jesus Christ. There is, according to the Bible, much cause to fear for rich and prosperous Christians.² There is such danger, lest riches should be turned into golden chains to fetter down the soul to earth ; lest they should pamper pride, nourish sensuality, and minister to the natural selfishness of the heart, that it is perhaps a merciful dispensation, that the majority of God's people, in every age, have been comparatively poor. Yet the

¹ Matt. vi. 33. ² See Matt. xix. 23, 24 ; Luke xii. 16 ;
xvi. 19 ; James v. 1 ; Rev. vi. 15—17.

rich may learn—Christ can teach them—how to abound and to be full, not only without sin, but in such a manner as to glorify God. The way is simply this. They are to consider all they have as belonging to Jesus Christ, and therefore to be employed, wisely and discreetly, yet cheerfully and liberally, in his service. They will still provide for themselves and for their families; for Christ tells them to do so: “If any one provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”¹ But they will not make prudence a cloak for covetousness: they will be content with a moderate provision for themselves and theirs, and the remainder will be lent to the Lord, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, teach the ignorant, relieve distress, and send the gospel of Christ throughout a perishing world. So also with influence; prosperity commonly gives a man a wider sphere of usefulness, and a more commanding position for doing good. Where much is given,

¹ 1 Tim. v. 8.

much will be required. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.¹ Prosperous Christians, receive the word of exhortation. Your example, words, actions, have a continual bearing on society. Let them all give a consistent, grateful testimony for Christ. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."²

But is adversity or poverty your lot? Then, with the apostle, you will know "how to be abased, how to be hungry, and suffer need," in a manner becoming a Christian. You will then resort to no unlawful means of supplying your wants. A Christian had rather dig than beg, rather beg than defraud, rather starve than steal. But more than this: no hard thought of God will fill your mind; no pining anxieties will fret your spirit. You will think with yourself thus:—I certainly have given myself to Christ: it seems his will, that I should be poor as to this world's goods. Well: be it so! He gives me no worse condition than what he

¹ Matt. v. 14.

² Matt. v. 16.

took himself. He had not where to lay his head, yet he gives me a lowly cottage, and deigns to hallow it with his gracious presence. If I know hunger and thirst, so did he and his apostles. If I have not the benefit of great riches, I, at least, have not their responsibility. Though I get on but roughly, God helps me forward; and then, the riches of Christ, the bread of life, the new wine of consolation, the hope of glory,—these are mine for every day's use. The poor Christian passes a fine mansion; he need not covet. I have a better mansion than that, he may say, “even a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”¹ Does a splendid equipage roll by? He need not envy. The Lord, who walked with the disciples to Emmaus, honours him with his converse. He can pray for the rich and great, that they also may have fellowship with Christ. At another time, trains of servants sweep along:—I have more glorious attendants; are not the angels all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them

¹ 2 Cor. v. 1.

who shall be heirs of salvation ?¹ Does one pass, clad in gay attire ? My soul, thou needest not envy. Hast thou not robes made white in the blood of the Lamb, garments of praise, a mantle of salvation ?

And then, if your means be ever so scanty, and if you have ever so little of this world's goods, you may yet do something for Christ with that little. Remember the widow's mite. Let not the one talent be wrapped in a napkin. Imitate her, of whom the Lord said, "She hath done what she could."²

Brethren, let none of you say or think, that, because in lowly condition, you cannot serve Christ. It grieves us when the poor make their poverty an excuse for irreligion, and plead, for instance, the want of clothes, as a reason for absence from the house of God. It grieves us, because we know that they, who so excuse themselves, must be strangers in heart to the blessedness of true religion. The gospel is meant for all. Its influence would make the rich man poor in

¹ Heb. i. 14.

² Mark xiv. 8.

spirit, and the poor man rich in grace. 'It would come down with you to your lowest estate, cheer you in every trouble, walk with you all through the valley of humiliation, and talk so pleasantly with you by the way, of Christ, and heaven, and glory, as would make you feel "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."¹

"*I can do all things*:"—this expression thus includes all the virtues and graces suitable for a Christian in prosperity and adversity. But it includes yet more. The apostle does not say, I can do *these* things, but I can do *all* things.

Christian devotedness surely includes the entire renunciation of all sin. Be not deceived on this point. In giving yourself to Christ, you give up every thing which he forbids. And you know that he forbids all sin. If you had some sin dear to you as a right hand, that right hand must be cut off, were it your bosom friend, it must be forsaken. On this point I would speak with all plainness. You cannot retain your sin

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

and your Saviour. I speak not of sins of infirmity: I know that "in many things we all offend:"¹ but this I do mean, if a believer, in giving yourself to Christ, you honestly give up your sins, you renounce every false way, a grand change is seen by man in your outward life, and God sees in your heart a growing abhorrence of all sin. Again I say, Be not deceived. Profess what he may, no man, still going on in any known sin, is a true believer in Christ: no one living in habits of malice, profaneness, falsehood, intemperance, uncleanness, fraud, ungodliness, is as yet out of danger for his soul. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"²

And with sin, you must give up, what the Scripture calls, the love of the world, which is closely connected with sin, and cannot be cherished without sin. Again I would speak with all plainness. Perhaps the greatest danger for professing Christians, in the present day, is from the love of the world. Yet how express is Scripture! I marvel at

¹ James iii. 2.

² Rom. vi. 2.

the Christian who can despise its warning, or jest with such words as these : “ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”¹ Do any ask what is meant ? The same Scripture explains : “ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”² If, then, any of you are chiefly engrossed with the things of time and sense ; if sensuality, ambition, pride, are your ruling principles ; if your thoughts turn, as on a pivot, round the desire of worldly pleasure, profit, fame ; then I dare not speak to you as to true believers in Christ ; you are not acting on the instructions of your childhood, that you “ should renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.” What mean ye, O worldly-minded professors ? how long halt ye between two opinions ? When mean ye to obey the exhortation, “ Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the

¹ John ii. 15.² 1 John ii. 16.

Lord?"¹ How do ye interpret the apostle's meaning, where he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world?"²

Supposing then sin and the world to be cheerfully given up, as they will be by every true believer amongst us, much still remains to make up the devoted Christian. It is not enough to be a negative sort of a character, to have done no one any great harm, to be not as other men are, in gross sin; you are to "do good unto all men, especially unto them of the household of faith."³ Your walk through life is to be that of a benefactor scattering blessings. Your footsteps are to follow Him "who went about doing good."⁴ All your talents, energies, influence, efforts, are to tend to one object, and to be consecrated to one cause.

If really devoted to Christ, we shall refuse no service, however difficult and self-denying, to which he plainly calls. When he

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 17.

² Gal vi. 14.

³ Gal. vi. 10.

⁴ Acts x. 38.

says, "Who will go for us?"¹ Every faithful soul will spring forward and say, "Here am I, send me."¹ I am aware, brethren, of the low state of many professing Christians in regard to self-denial. But our standard is the Bible. When Christ says, Do this; you, if a true believer, will go and do it. If he calls for your testimony, in any way; if he asks you to go a journey, to pay a visit, to labour in a society, to endure hardship, scorn, imprisonment, for his sake, you will not, you cannot find it in your heart to refuse him anything.

Brethren, I know not whether ye are rising with our subject. If ye are, I cannot but look on you with intense interest. Christ may call some of you to no common services. Who can tell, but this congregation may be honoured to furnish a devoted missionary, a faithful minister, or, if need should arise, a confessor, or a martyr? At all events, who of you is not called to become the faithful, consistent Christian? Then, what trials, temptations, afflictions may

¹ Isaiah vi. 8.

await some ! what a world for us all to overcome ! what an enemy to resist ! what corruptions to mortify ! Already, brethren, I feel anxious to ask, Can ye do all these things ?

And yet, these are not all the things to which every devoted Christian is called. I feel my inability to do justice to my subject. I have not described the spiritual mind, the heavenly affections, the fervent zeal, the holy courage, the gentleness, the meekness, the humility, which Christ looks for in each of you. I am ashamed of my poor account of the work of faith, and the labour of love, to which you are called. How little have I said to explain that “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord!”¹ Brethren, the devoted Christian is aiming to become like God. He is “born of God,”² “transformed by the renewing of his mind,”³ “made a partaker of the divine nature.”⁴—He daily tries to obey the precept, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

² 1 John iii. 9.

³ Rom. xii. 2.

⁴ 2 Pet. i. 4.

heaven is perfect.”¹ He is daily “giving all diligence to add to his faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”² “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,” you, if the devoted Christian, will “think on these things.”³

But, brethren, I must leave this sketch of Christian devotedness imperfect and incomplete. It would require the tongue of an angel, or the pen of a ready writer, to do it justice. Your own life must furnish a better explanation. But now the thought presses, Is all this practicable? how can I do all these and other like things?

II. “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me:*”—here is the secret of the believer’s strength. By nature

¹ Matt. v. 48.

² 2 Pet. i. 5, 7.

³ Phil. iv. 8.

he is quite like other men ;—as depraved in heart, as corrupt in spirit, as earthly in mind, as sinful, feeble, impotent to what is good, as they are. He repents, he believes, he is justified ; but all this is brought to pass, not by his own wisdom or power, but by the grace of God blessing the instruments and means employed. Christ is “ exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to *give* repentance.”¹ “ By grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the *gift* of God.”² It is through the same grace making the soul willing in the day of Christ’s power, that the believer so cheerfully yields himself to God, and becomes devoted to his service. But even then, his strength for the greatest and also for the least spiritual or acceptable service is in Jesus Christ, not in himself, lest any man should boast. “ Without me,” says Christ, “ ye can do *nothing*.”³ “ *I can do all things,*” responds the Christian, “ *through Christ which strengtheneth me !*”

And how does Christ strengthen his people for devoted service ?

¹ Acts v. 31.

² Eph. ii. 8.

³ John xv. 5.

1. By the energetic motive of his cross :
“The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”¹
What strength, brethren, and force in that motive ! What heart can resist it ? You were dead ; Christ died for you :—read there, with close application to yourselves, the guilt of sin, the value of the soul, the love of God, the grace of Christ. In that fact, study the doctrines of the fall, of original and personal sin, of redemption through the blood of Christ, of justification through faith in him, of sanctification through his Spirit. In those doctrines, read your obligations to God, and your daily duties. And then, think much of the need to others of the same Saviour ;—all have sinned, all were dead, all must come to Christ or perish. Will ye not tell them all ye can of the worth of the cross of Christ ? will ye not let that motive

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

have its due and proper influence on your hearts? Then I ask no more. That motive, rightly applied, will make every one of you the devoted Christian.

2. For it is not by a motive alone, however mighty, that the Saviour endues the soul with much strength. The lever must be moved by a mighty power. Christ also strengtheneth, through the Holy Spirit applying the motive of his cross to the believer's soul. Others can hear of that cross, and go away and live as much to themselves, the world, and sin, as before. But when God the Holy Spirit touches the heart and conscience with Divine power, deeply convinces of sin, beats down every high thought, shows the man to himself a poor, lost, guilty sinner: and then takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them unto him, opening the eyes of his mind to see, and inclining his heart to receive the truth as it is in Jesus: when he makes known to the sinner, now a penitent believer, the freeness and fulness of the salvation, in which he is now personally interested: then it is

that the heart owns the Saviour's claims, and the man springs forward to holy duties, quite glad to be allowed to do or to suffer for his sake. Thus the strength, which the Holy Spirit applies, is that of Christ, the crucified, risen, glorified Redeemer: it is exercised with infinite wisdom, tenderness, and love, agreeably to the sympathy of Christ, the Head, with his suffering members on earth; it is increased at seasons of peculiar need, so that "out of weakness we are made strong;"¹ "As is thy day, so shall thy strength be."²

And thus the strength first given, is continually renewed. The apostle says, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me:*" not merely, who strengthened me once, at first conversion; who has strengthened me in many former trials; but who *strengtheneth* me from day to day, and from hour to hour. So, brethren, with yourselves. Christ does not give, at first conversion, a store of grace for after use, but he keeps an infinite supply in his own

¹ Heb. xi. 34.

² Deut. xxxiii. 25.

hand, and imparts to you here a little and there a little, rather, here a sufficiency and there a sufficiency, according to your need. This is a goodly method. Our grace for daily use is far better in his keeping than in ours. Beside which, what a sweetness it gives in every duty, to realize his very present help and strength ; what a refreshment in trouble, to find that he has not left nor forsaken us ; what a kind memorial have we that his arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his heart hardened that he cannot feel, when we find him sending grace, so suitable and sufficient, at the very season of our need !

Brethren, what an inward witness for Christ has every strengthened and comforted believer ! Infidels doubt whether Jesus rose from the dead ; Socinians dispute against his deity : the true believer knows and is sure, that Christ, who died for sinners, is risen, ascended, and reigning gloriously ; he is certain that Jesus is both God and man, by the more than human might, applied with such gracious sympathy to his

own soul in weakness and affliction. Such strength cannot come from man, for man, untaught of God, does not even comprehend it ; it cannot come from himself, for he has had proof enough that in himself he has no might ; it cannot come from the evil spirit, for it promotes holiness, and glorifies God, —effects which Satan hates to see : it does come from Christ ; for whence it came, thither it tends ; it testifies of Christ, it leads to Christ, it enables for every service to which Christ calls.

3. Thus Christ strengthens by the motive of his cross, and the grace of his Spirit. I mention but one method more. He also strengthens by the glorious hope set before the devoted Christian. The cross makes him set out, the crown before him attracts his eye, and animates him to persevere. In worldly pursuits, we all know the force of hope, and the withering effect of despair. But the true believer is a stranger to despair. He cannot find that word spoken to him in his Bible, except in a negative connexion.¹

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 8. “ Perplexed, but not in despair.”

On the contrary, the more simple his faith in Christ, and the more devoted his spirit, the more does his hope of glory increase, improve, and become confirmed. He knows full well that he is to receive that glory, not through his own poor works, but for the Saviour's sake,—the purchase of his dying sorrows, the gift of his free grace; yet he also knows, that the more he loves Christ, becomes sanctified in heart, is transformed into the image of Christ, and labours and suffers for his sake; the greater will be his meetness for heaven, the brighter will be his crown, the richer his reward of grace. In this hope there is a mighty force to give a continually increasing strength to the believer's soul. For every year brings glory nearer; every trial endured, leaves one trial less to come; every victory gained, prepares for another; every spiritual blessing received, is an earnest of better things in reserve. Hence, as bodies move faster the nearer they are to their centre of attraction, as the racer quickens his pace the nearer he approaches the goal, so with the believer,

the nearer to Christ and glory, the more does his faith grow, and his devotedness increase.

But we must conclude. What says the unconverted man to this subject? I suppose he will soberly pronounce it all enthusiasm. I would thank him to write down, seriously and honestly, his own idea of the meaning of our text, and of what manner of person a Christian ought to be. Let him compare his account with the Scriptures, and let conscience judge between us. He would say, "The matter has been over-stated:"—my serious impression, after studying the subject, is, that it has been under-stated. Does he still think that I have carried things too far? do you mean, I would ask, farther than the Bible carries them? If you do not mean that, then what is your standard? Perhaps he would add, "But it is impracticable." I answer, "I grant that it is, except through Christ, that strengtheneth. Now have *you* sought grace and strength from him? Will you go and seek it now? Will you daily ask of him strength to repent, believe, obey?"

Sinner, does thy heart refuse? Is this its language, "I love my sins : I hate God : I will not have Christ to reign over me, his ministers shall not persuade me?" Must I then tell thee of the terrors of the Lord? What I have been tracing in these discourses is the history of a saved soul : who could endure, what ear would not tingle, to hear the history of a lost soul? Yet, sinner, unless thou repentest, and believest the gospel, thou wilt have to hear sermons eloquent with the sighs of anguish, and pathetic with the groanings of remorse, throughout eternity. Poor, wretched soul! I would fain see thee the saved soul. If entreaties could move, I would beg and pray of thee not to despise so great salvation. With Christ, thou mayest yet do all things; without him thou canst do nothing but go on adding sin to sin, till ripe for destruction. Sinner, our next lecture will bring us to the last, the closing scene for the soul as to this world. Try even yet to overtake our course. Thou wilt not be ready for that topic, unless thou understandest this and the foregoing subjects. Begin, then, for

Christ's sake, and thy soul's sake, talk not of moral inability to what is good as an excuse, but use it as an argument for going instantly to Christ for the grace which can enable.

Let this subject speak encouragement to the young and timid Christian. You have already felt weakness and insufficiency ; you have tried this duty and that, but have sadly failed ; behold now how you may be able to do all things. It is true, you will still have to mourn over short-comings and imperfections. The reason is, because faith is often so weak, prayer so cold, and our own corruptions so mix themselves with all we do. Hence, you are to be ever humble, ever depending solely on the merits of Christ, ever desiring more grace. Go then, young Christians, and try your hand at holy duties. It is quite true that you are very weak ; it is equally true that Christ is very strong, and that his strength is made perfect in weakness.¹ Have ye not read, and is it not a sweet and gracious

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

assurance, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."¹

Lastly, I shall be truly thankful, should this subject stir up any devoted soul to greater diligence in serving our gracious Lord. There is in such topics, however feebly treated, much to make us hang down our heads with shame and humiliation. So much time lost! such gracious opportunities gone by! such privileges so slightly improved! Oh, how little have we done, compared with what we could have done, and ought to have done for Christ! Then, think of your unconverted days, worse than lost! Remember, when the soul was devoted, in a bad sense, wholly given to vanities, follies, vile affections! And yet, for all that sin-

¹ Isaiah xl. 29—31.

fulness Christ gives you a full pardon :—I speak to true believers :—he answers, he undertakes for you. You are “justified freely by God’s grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”¹

And now, will ye not speed to serve, praise, and glorify him all you can? And what is there which you cannot do, through him that strengtheneth you? I speak not of things miraculous in nature. I bid you not go and miraculously heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead, remove mountains, or walk upon the sea. I do bid you, in Christ’s name, to do things as contrary to flesh and blood. Be instruments, in his hand, to heal those who are sick in heart, leprous with moral pollution, dead in sins. Go, and serve Christ in levelling the mountains of difficulty, which oppose the progress of his gospel. Go and walk, his hand sustaining, over the waves of this troublesome world.

Christians, I call you, in Christ’s name, and I am sure that, through his grace, you

¹ Rom. iii. 24.

will obey the calling, to go and do all holy duties to which he invites. Go, and exercise Christian graces amid trials. Go, and be humble, pure, gentle, peaceable. Go, and labour for Christ, as opportunity is given. Do what you know you can do, through Christ that strengtheneth you. Rise at his bidding, superior to sloth, selfishness, and the fear of man. Cheerfully consent to be often wearied in his service, but never wearied of it! Gladly spend and be spent for him who died for you! There is much to be done for Christ in this wretched world:—to whom, but to *you*, should he look to do it? Oh, do what you can, and do it while you can! “*Brethren, the time is short!*”¹

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 29.

SERMON VI.

THE SOUL DEPARTING.

ACTS VII. 59, 60.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

SUCH was the happy death of Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian church. It may, at first sight, appear strange, to look, in the narrative of *his* death, for instruction how, and in what spirit, a Christian ought to die. His case, it may be thought, was so singular, and the circumstances of his death so extraordinary, that here can be no pattern for ourselves. But, on examina-

tion, I think it will be found, that, after allowing largely for all that was extraordinary, there will remain certain grand characteristics, in which the death of Stephen illustrates the state of mind in which every faithful disciple of Jesus Christ should prepare to die. It is also possible, that, as to see a Christian die is more striking than to hear of it from others, so, a scriptural example, like this, may bring the grand features of a truly Christian death more vividly before us, than any text could do, which speaks of death under circumstances less present to the eye.

It is, however, remarkable, how very few examples of the deaths of the faithful are given us in the New Testament. We have this of Stephen; another, of the penitent thief; we have few, if any, beside. We read that Lazarus was sick and died; we have no particulars of his death. We read of the deaths of John the Baptist and James, but nothing of what they said or did when dying. There is no scriptural account of the deaths of Paul, or Peter, or John. We

are told how they lived, how they thought and spake of death; but the last scene of their lives is not described to us by any inspired pen. This circumstance renders the account of Stephen's death the more valuable. At the same time, it seems to say, that, after all, the important thing is to live the Christian's life, to be truly found abiding in Christ, to learn in spirit to die daily; and then, it matters comparatively little whether, in our last moments, we have the leisure, the faculties, and the opportunity for glorifying God, with which some are favoured. Whatever be the circumstantial, to the true believer, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."¹

Hence, brethren, I come to you, not now on your death-beds, but here, in health and strength, to bid you prepare to die the Christian's death, by living his life, and being found in that frame of mind in which a Christian would wish to die. Then, when death actually approaches, you will have no new lesson to learn; you will have but to

¹ Phil. i. 21.

trim your replenished lamps, and go forth to meet the bridegroom.

This subject, you are aware, is to conclude this little Series of Lectures. When you have long had familiar acquaintance with our former topics, you will yet have to die. Even if you neglect all those things, you cannot escape death. "It is appointed unto men once to die."¹ Therefore, it is better now to face the subject, which, though of gloomy and forbidding aspect, the grace of God can yet make truly pleasant. Jesus Christ, "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light,"² can enable us to meditate, with cheerful interest, on our present topic, *the soul departing home to God*.

The characteristics of a truly Christian death as seen in the case of Stephen;—this, brethren, is our subject.

Observe, *First*, his faithful confession of the Saviour before men. This you find in the speech given in the former part of this chapter; the object of which is sometimes

¹ Heb. ix. 27.

² 2 Tim. i. 10.

overlooked. Its design was, 1. To move the conscience of his hearers with a sense of sin ; and, 2. To answer the charges which had been maliciously brought against him. Withal he confesses Jesus Christ and him crucified, as the prophet promised by God through Moses,¹ and as the Just One fore-shown by the prophets, betrayed and slain by the Jews.² Now, this is what every Christian should be desirous to do before he dies. Stephen, we see, confessed Christ before the high priest and the council, although he must have known that the confession might cost him his life. And he, my brethren, was but one of the noble army of martyrs who have died most agonizing deaths, rather than deny the Lord who bought them. Surely they who live in milder times, and who, when death approaches, find themselves surrounded by professed Christians and kind friends, should not be ashamed to give their faithful testimony to Jesus Christ. The Saviour claims, and his church expects, that, if you do look

¹ Acts vii. 37.² Acts vii. 52.

to him for salvation, as a gift procured for you by his dying sorrows, you should humbly and ingenuously confess your obligation. Are you afraid of hypocrisy? The fear may be good: but it is no hypocrisy to confess with the tongue the genuine feelings of the heart.

Confess, then, Jesus Christ before men, while you can; do it faithfully from time to time; do it very distinctly when you feel that you cannot have long to continue here. Imitate Jacob, Moses, David, and Simeon, who, toward the close of life, all gave very plain testimonies of their hope in Christ. Confess, with Paul "the aged," that you know in whom you have trusted, and are persuaded of his faithfulness:¹ testify with Peter, when about to put off this your tabernacle, that you have not followed cunningly devised fables:² unite with John, who, in extreme old age, bore faithful witness to the divinity, the grace, and the atoning love of Christ.³ And who can tell but it may please God to bless your testimony to

¹ 2 Tim. i. 12.

² 2 Peter i. 14—16.

³ See his Epistles.

those who survive? Among those about you when death is drawing near, there may be some, Christians in name, infidels in heart; others, too careless and flippant ever to have given to religion a serious thought; there may be self-righteous persons present, quite ignorant that they can only be saved by the righteousness of Christ; there may be unsound professors, holding the truth in unrighteousness; there may be many younger Christians, needing to be encouraged; many also of your own or longer standing, to whom it may afterwards prove no small comfort, to know that you had found grace to be faithful, and had not died without hope toward God. Who, I say, can tell but your testimony, given at such a time, with a close appeal, like Stephen's, to conscience and to Scripture, may be greatly blessed? Do not some of you remember, with peculiar interest, similar instructions given to yourselves? Who can forget the last exhortations of a departed father, mother, brother, husband, wife, child, friend? At all events, you will do your duty:—and

that is your part. If they heed not, the responsibility is theirs. If they regard, what cause for thankfulness to God!

May I not, then, affectionately leave this duty on your memory and conscience, that as a slight return for Christ's love in witnessing a good confession for you before Pontius Pilate, you will faithfully confess him before men? that you will do it now; renew it faithfully from time to time; persevere in a consistent profession of his gospel; and at length, when the time that you must die visibly approaches, then, gather up your strength, or, rather, seek strength of God, once again to declare faithfully your simple testimony to Jesus Christ, as the true Messiah, the only, but all-sufficient Saviour, your hope and confidence in going before God!

The fifty-fifth verse will furnish us with a *Second* characteristic of a faithful Christian, at the approach of death. "But he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand

of God." There was doubtless something extraordinary in this. We before heard of Stephen as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;"¹ and again, as "full of faith and power, doing great wonders and miracles among the people."² Hence, it is probable, that now also, before death, he had the Holy Spirit in a more extraordinary measure and manner, than is the lot of Christians in general. So also, the view which he had of the glory of God, and of Jesus standing at his right hand, was probably more sensible, immediate, and august, than what we are to expect. But, separate what was extraordinary, and there will remain what is the privilege of every faithful Christian at such a time.

If true believers, ye are not ignorant even now of the power and grace of the Holy Ghost. It is he who made your soul sensible of danger: he touched you with godly sorrow; he led you to believe in Jesus Christ; he has strengthened you for much conflict; his might and influence

¹ Acts vi. 5.

² Acts vi. 8.

make you the devoted Christian. Thus you know him now. When you come to die, ask, and you shall still have that holy Comforter with you in that hour of trial. It is not his custom to desert humble souls in that emergency. Frequently they are then permitted to have a fuller measure of his grace ; that being often the season of their deepest need. He will bring you sweet promises from the divine word, he will humble anew for sin, he will again take of the things of Jesus and show them unto you, and so he will comfort with solid comfort. He will specially give you larger and nobler views of the glory of God, as it shines forth in the covenant of grace. We, I believe, have but a feeble idea of the grand and sublime conception of the glory of God in Christ Jesus, often given by the Holy Spirit, as a soul-reviving cordial to the dying Christian. Then, the faithful disciple often sees more clearly than ever the glory of the moral attributes of God ; the divine justice, holiness, mercy, truth, and love, beautifully combined in the plan of that

redemption, of which, the same good Spirit witnesses to his spirit, that he is through grace a true partaker. Brethren, in a dying hour, human glory appears a falling star, an ignis fatuus, a bubble ready to burst: the Divine glory appears, what it is, a grand reality.

In connexion with the glory of God, Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and so may you with the eye of faith. The Word of God declares that he is there; your faith, if you have faith, readily believes it. You then no more doubt that Jesus is personally at the right hand of God at this moment, than you doubt that you are here. That thought will also often comfort you in trial, and animate you in conflict. And especially in your last trial, and when called to conflict with the "king of terrors,"¹ this your view of Jesus may be peculiarly lively and impressive. By faith you may see him there at the right hand of God, the place of power, dignity, and joint sovereignty with the Father, standing as an advocate to plead, as a friend to beckon

¹ Job xviii. 14.

you, Come up hither! as the Lord of heaven, ready to welcome your departing spirit entering into his kingdom.

Brethren, nothing can so comfort and cheer in a dying hour as a believing view of Jesus in his mediatorial exercise of power and love. Other friends cannot help then. Though a father were standing at your bedside, he can do little for you then. The kindest of mothers can but wipe your forehead, smooth your pillow, grasp your hand, and moisten it with a tear. Worldly friends will prove miserable comforters then. But Jesus, if by faith you can but see him standing to befriend you, will chase away all your fears, uphold your sinking spirit, and revive your fainting soul with the manifestation of his grace.

We come to a *Third* characteristic of a faithful death. We find it in verse 59:—*“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”* Here is a prayer to Jesus Christ to receive the departing soul: and this, without making any deduction for what was extraordinary in the case before us, I at once put

down among the characteristics of every faithful death.

He called upon God. The word "*God*," is not in the original; but it is clearly implied. To whom but God is prayer permitted? Who but God can take charge of the soul of man? They who deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ are much perplexed with this prayer of Stephen addressed to him. The explanation, which some of them have given, is, to my mind, such an awful attempt to explain away Divine truth, that I will not state it:—it is so impious. But I leave them. Brethren, I think you will feel in a dying hour, that your departing soul needs a Divine Saviour. You have one in Jesus Christ. You may call upon him then, even as now. His ear will not be heavy, though yours may, when death is sealing up your faculties. His eye will not have lost its power of gazing affectionately on you, when yours is becoming dim and closed. His hand will not be shortened, in the hour when yours will have become tremulous and feeble. But lift up the hand, the heart, the eye, the soul, in

prayer to him then, and you will find him a very near and present help in that your time of trouble.

Brethren, a Christian should die *praying*. Other men die in different ways, according to their character and temper. Julius Cæsar died adjusting his robes, that he might fall gracefully. Augustus died in a compliment to Livia his wife ;¹ Tiberius in dissimulation ;² Vespasian in a jest.³ The infidel Hume died, with pitiful jokes about Charon and his boat ; Rousseau, with language of presumptuous boasting ; Voltaire, with mingled imprecations and supplications ; Paine, with shrieks of agonizing remorse. Multitudes die with sullenness, some with blasphemies faltering on their tongue. But, brethren, the humble Christian would die praying. Well says the poet :—

“ Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air ;
His watch-word at the gates of death,
He enters heaven with prayer !”⁴

¹ “ Livia, conjugii nostri memor, vive et vale.”

² “ Jam Tiberium vires et corpus, non dissimulatio deserebant.” Tac.

³ “ Ut puto, Deus fio.” See Lord Bacon’s Essay on Death.

⁴ Montgomery.

But it is not a prayer to an unknown God, or the God of a Deist, which will serve then. It should be to God the Father, and to Jesus the Son of God, the only Saviour and Mediator.

But, observe for what Stephen prayed. "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!*" This is the prayer of faith, commending the immortal spirit to the covenant care of Jesus. The spirit does not die with the body. None but God, who gave, can take away the soul's existence, and he has declared that he never will. Would that bad men would think on that! You cannot get rid of your soul's existence: you cannot cease to be: you may wish it; though the wish is monstrous and unnatural. But there is no annihilation for any soul of man. Oh, come to our Saviour! give him your guilty soul, to be justified through his atonement, washed in his blood, regenerated by his Spirit. Make to him now that surrender of your soul, for which he calls. Renew this happy self-dedication every day, very specially every Sabbath, and most solemnly from time to time at the

Lord's Supper. And then, when you come to die, it will only be, to do once more what you have so often done in former days,—again to commend your soul very humbly, believingly, and affectionately, into the faithful care of Jesus Christ.

Believers, behold here the secret of dying ! “ These all died in faith.”¹ Bad men die reluctantly : life is extorted from them as if by main force. The believer dies willingly ; his will is sweetly submitted to his Father's will : he makes it a religious act to die. Just as Jesus himself commended his human soul to his Father, saying, “ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ;”² so his believing disciple commends his soul to Jesus, and through him to the Father. Here, I repeat, is the secret how to die happily. To those who know not that secret, it is a fearful thing to die. It is a serious matter for any. But to the worldly-minded and ungodly, if not past feeling, to die must be as one of the heathen philosophers confessed it, “ of all formidable things the most formidable.”³

¹ Heb. xi. 13.

² Luke xxiii. 46.

³ Aristotle.

Only mention a neighbour's death in a gay circle :—lo ! you have thrown a gloom over the whole assembly ; all are evidently sorry that the topic was introduced. The ancient Romans would not mention death in plain words, if they could avoid it, but only by circumlocution and implication. The heathens, at this day, in like manner, “ shun all conversation on death, as most repugnant to their feelings;”—I quote the words of an eye-witness,¹—“ and account it the height of cruelty to speak of the probability of a sick friend's death, even to his relatives.” Even serious Christians are often in bondage through fear of death. It is such a venture ; a mistake may be so fatal ; to go before God is so awful ; judgment will bring to light such secrets ; that many think, How can I die ? Yet you all must. Be

¹ Mr. E. Baker, of the London Missionary Society, in Madagascar. He gives this affecting testimony. “ The stoutest-hearted men will, as I have had occasion to observe in Madagascar, when stretched on a death-bed, exclaim, with all the feebleness of children and anguish of despair, “ I die ! I die ! O mother ! O father ! I die ! ” while the big tears will trickle down their olive cheeks in abundance.”

persuaded, give your soul to Jesus now ; do it again from day to day ; and then, when your dying day is come, again approach the Saviour, and say, “ Lord, I hear thee calling for my spirit ; I see the wagons sent to fetch me home to thee ; in the hand of death I recognize thy hand of love : thou askest for my soul, take it, for it is thine. Do with it what thou wilt, I have given it to thee to be washed in thy blood, and sanctified by thy Spirit ; I am sure thou wilt do it no harm ! ”

Does a thought here arise, And what shall become of my poor body ? Why, even if, like Stephen's, it were battered and bruised with stones murderously hurled, even though it were burning at a stake, or tortured on a rack, you need not mind ; look but that the soul be safe ; and then, whatever may become of the body, Jesus will take care of thy dust and ashes. The remains of his faithful servants are to him the most precious parts of this material earth. They form a pledge of his final coming. For if your souls are truly his, he will hereafter raise up

your bodies glorious, incorruptible, immortal, like unto his own.¹

Thus, soul and body shall be safe for eternity. Brethren, will you not remember this when you come to die? I may not be near you; if I were, I could but tell you of these things, and pray with you. But my own dying hour will have come before that of some of you. But, do remember, for the love of Christ, that it is your duty, your privilege, and safety, then again to commit your soul into his hands. Oh, trust to no false hope; call not on saint or angel; lean on no broken reed in that hour of trial. But lean on Jesus, stay the heart on his faithful promise: do it heartily, humbly, as poor miserable sinners, as unprofitable servants, even at the best; plead again his righteous obedience unto death for sinners, fix the eye of faith on his cross, make that your only glorying. And then, I dare promise, he will receive your soul. He will carry it peacefully, if not joyfully, through the dark valley. He will comfort by the way. And presently,

¹ Phil. iii. 21.

like the shepherd carrying home his once lost sheep, and calling his neighbours around him to rejoice, he will introduce your happy soul into the midst of the gratulations of angels, and the thanksgivings of the redeemed, for the grace which brought you into fellowship with them in the presence of the Father.

There is, however, yet another, even a *Fourth* characteristic of a faithful death, as seen in the case of Stephen, at verse 60 : “ *And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*” There you see the charity toward man, with which a Christian dies. Here again Stephen followed his Lord. When Jesus was dying on the cross, he prayed ;— and the prayer ought to have softened the hearts of his murderers :—“ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Now, if Jesus could forgive and pray for those who crucified him ; if Stephen could find it in his heart to pray for those who were crushing him with stones, and con-

¹ Luke xxiii. 34.

senting to his death ; if God, for Christ's sake, forgives his bitter enemies, and by his grace converted some of the murderers of Jesus into faithful disciples ;¹ then, surely it is your duty, before you die, to forgive your enemies, if you have any, however they may have offended or injured you. Would you do it aright *then* ? Try, and do it *now*. To die is altogether so great a thing, that we should not then be learning things which we ought to have learned years before.

O that I might persuade you, if at variance with any, as some of you very probably are, to forgive them freely, to go and pray for them, to return good for evil, to put away from you "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."² May I hope that you will obey this exhortation ? My soul sighs within me to think of the unforgiving tempers of

¹ Compare Acts ii. 23, with verse 41, &c. ² Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

some professing Christians. Yet there is no duty which Christ more earnestly pressed on his disciples than this of mutual forgiveness. He wonderfully wrapped it up in our daily prayer for pardon; so that if unforgiving, we must be unforgiven, and our very prayers will be witnesses against us, and even invoke curses on our heads! May we all think of this as often as we say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us!"

My friends, we are told that when an eminent American divine¹ once preached on this duty of forgiving injuries, after the service, two families, which had been for years at variance, remained behind, as if unable to leave the place till they had sought a mutual reconciliation. Would that every one of you might feel a similar constraint, and drop, from this moment, every feeling of animosity toward every one who may in any way have offended you! You will lose nothing by following this advice. Whatever be the sweetness of revenge, forgive-

¹ Jonathan Edwards.

ness is a sweeter and a purer feeling. Your bosom will be more calm and peaceful, when it has lost that resentful temper. Your new spirit of kindness may also soften whom enmity did but exasperate. And above all, you will obey and imitate Christ, and have begun to prepare aright for a dying hour.

Surely none of you would wish to die in malice. You would not carry the petty quarrels of this life into the other world. You hardly can be hoping to retain enmity in heaven. There is no such thing there ! Oh, cherish now those principles which you may hope to retain there. That is a golden rule for holy living, as well as a preparative for faithful dying. Cultivate the principles, which will not die when you die. Get seeds sown in your hearts now, which may not wither when your body withers, but may expand and bloom in the paradise of God. Forgiving charity is one, being a part of the love which never faileth. Ask God to sow, to water, and to nourish it in your hearts. It is no common plant in this unforgiving world. Look at the world's men of honour ;

—offend them, and they will kill you, if you are weak and wicked enough to let them. What a thought, that numbers, high in station, and of polished manners, and calling themselves Christians, live with a settled determination to break the sixth commandment, whenever an imputation shall be cast on their honour! Then, look into worldly families, and mark the rancorous divisions. Enter into the history of churches, and see, with sorrow, how infidels have found cause to laugh, where angels might find cause to weep, in the bitter animosities of the followers of the Lamb. Nay, look into your own hearts, and see if there have not been there also the seeds of “envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness.” For Christ’s sake, try and root them out. If others injure you, never injure yourself again by harbouring malice toward them. As you would live peaceably, and die joyfully, see that you freely forgive, even as you hope to be forgiven.

Thus, brethren, you have heard, from

Stephen's example, of *Four* characteristics of the Christian's soul when departing home to God. The *First* was in the faithful confession of Christ before men : the *Second*, in a believing view of the Divine glory, and of Jesus at the right hand of God ; and this through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit : the *Third*, in a spirit of prayer, with a faithful committal of the soul to Jesus Christ : and the *Fourth*, in a lively exercise of forgiving charity toward men.

And what, you may ask, comes after this? You will then have nothing to do but to die ! Mark how pleasantly this is told us in Stephen's case, verse 60 : “ *And when he had said this, he fell asleep.* ” What a peaceful expression ! What weary man dreads sleep ? Yet to a true believer this is death, to fall asleep in Jesus ! Not that the soul sleeps :—that is but a dreamy thought. To be “ absent from the body,” is to be “ present with the Lord.”¹ But the body itself, when the soul is fled, is very much as in a sleep, waiting for the morning of the resurrection :

¹ 2 Cor. v. 8.

it is so insensible to sorrow and alarm ; it lies so still and motionless ; it looks so calm ! The soul also reposes, but not in torpid insensibility ; it rests, if it belonged to Jesus, from cares, troubles, conflicts ; it is carried through brighter regions than fancy ever wafted us in dreams and visions of the night ; it mingles with congenial spirits, it hears melodious voices, it sees what eye hath not seen ; it enjoys pleasures so pure, so exquisite, so full of blessedness and God, as to exceed our comprehension. And yet this is all no dream, no idle talk, none of fancy's fictions. All is real, solid, permanent. Whatever be wanting, the resurrection will supply. Then, the sleep which enchained the body will be burst ; the enchanter's spell will be broken ; the body will awake up, after the Saviour's image ; and the soul and body will re-unite to part no more, but to walk together, in holy companionship, through the ages of eternity.

But at this point we must stop. It falls not within the plan of this course of Sermons, to attempt to describe the bliss of

the redeemed in glory. My anxiety for you is, that, through the grace of Christ, you may but safely reach that happy land, and then I have no fear but you will find its blessedness beyond all that tongue could tell, or heart conceive here on earth. Having traced the departing soul home to God, there I can cheerfully leave it, safe for eternity. But remember, that soul is the very same which we so lately saw to be *the soul in danger*. The same soul has been spoken of throughout, but now, oh, how changed! Shall *yours* be that happy soul? Yours was the soul in danger. Shall it also be the soul in glory? What a question! May God rightly impress it on every conscience! Allow me a parting word of application with every soul.

I once again appeal to the unconverted sinner, whom I have so often addressed in these discourses. I have had his case much upon my heart, God is witness. And now, sinner, I am to speak a last word to thee, so far as concerns the opportunity afforded by this course of Sermons. I do it with

affection for thy soul, yet, if thou art hitherto unmoved, I do it also with much of sorrow and concern. My fellow-sinner, you and I have to die ! I have told you how the Christian hopes to die. Now, I would ask, *How do you mean to die ?* Is it, as you are living, careless, foolish, impenitent, scoffing ? Would you die in a stupor of insensibility ? or blaspheming ? or in a state of intoxication ? or “as a fool dieth ?”¹ Would you die what you are, an impenitent, unpardoned, unregenerate sinner ? Now, do not tell me that you mean to die like a true Christian, if you will not begin to live like one. It will be a terrible thing to have to learn repentance, faith, conflict, devotedness, regeneration, sanctification, all within the space of a few short hours, amid weakness, faintness, pain, agony, and, it may be, delirium and stupor.

I will not say that there never is such a thing as a death-bed repentance or conversion, which may issue in salvation. But I believe that it is no common thing, espe-

¹ 2 Sam. iii. 33.

cially in cases where men have been secretly putting the whole matter off to that hour. For God knows that secret intention, and it grievously insults his mercy. It presents his creature, saying, "I know very well that I ought to repent, but I will not do it yet. I will take my fill of sin. I will give to God the last dregs of life." Now, what must God think of that language? Yet thus your heart speaks, when you put off repentance to your death-bed. Oh, it is with a heavy heart that ministers visit the death-beds of the ungodly; they are so afraid of deceiving or giving false comfort; their only satisfaction is to do what they can, to warn, exhort, invite the dying sinner to come, ere too late, to Christ; then to pray with him and for him: and then, to leave the issue with the all-wise God!

But, sinner, am I to leave thee as I found thee, with the soul in danger? There are some here, who are on their way to glory. Are they and you presently to part, as by two opposite paths? Oh, what shall I say

to arouse thee ? what can I say more, if the prospect of the soul lost, heaven lost, Christ rejected, cannot move thee ? Has thy soul no feeling ? Is it incapable of hope and fear, of love and gratitude, of desire and expectation ? Oh, what a thing is sin, which has hardened, blinded, sensualized that heart, which, if given to God through Christ, might have been soft, tender, sensible, affectionate, and gentle ! Sinner, I must leave thee. I suppose that I ought to threaten thee with hell. But thou hast hell begun. There is no heaven in thy heart. There is no foretaste of heaven's peace, and joy, and blessedness, in that wretched soul. Is there any ? I will add no threat : thou art miserable enough already : my last word with thee, in this course of Sermons, shall not be a threat, but an invitation and a prayer. Sinner, I invite thee for the last time. Come yet, come now, as a guilty sinner, to Jesus Christ. Tell him how nearly thou hadst rejected him and salvation : ask for pardon through

his name : accept the mercy which he so freely offers. And here is my heart's desire and prayer for thee, "Lord, look on that hitherto impenitent sinner ! He has been invited once again to come to thee and be saved : and will he come ? Lord, thou knowest ! Persuade him, Lord, by thy own grace ; touch thou his conscience ; turn thou his heart ! Oh, give him repentance unto life ; lay not his sin to his charge ! Lord, thou heardest Stephen praying for thy enemies. Thou didst turn one of his persecutors into one of thy vessels of mercy. Thou madest Saul, the persecutor of Stephen and of thy church, to become Paul, the apostle, the martyr, the glorified saint ! Lord, make that hitherto impenitent sinner even yet a monument of thy grace !"

I turn to you, my believing brethren, who have gone with me through each stage of our course, and did not shrink from entering experimentally into what seemed such painful topics as repentance and conflict. See whither I have been leading you this evening, even to the last stage of the

journey of life, to the verge of glory, to the top of Pisgah, whence you may survey the heavenly Canaan.

Let young Christians, whose benefit also I have much consulted in these Lectures, be encouraged,—not to carelessness or presumption; I hope I have said nothing to lead to that; I did not mean it, if I have;—but to a simple, affectionate reliance on Jesus Christ in life and in death. Be not ashamed of such a Saviour. Count it your privilege to belong to him. Give him your hearts, and then your lives will also be given to him. Shun no conflict, refuse no service, to which he is pleased to call. Allow me the hope, that you will faithfully follow him, when some of us are gone hence. Allow me the expectation of meeting you in heaven, and of there hearing, from each of you, a fuller and a better account of the history of a saved soul!

Elder Christians, who have known these things for years, whose souls, by long experience, are intimate with all my topics, except that of this discourse, and whom

meditation has made familiar with that also ; let this little course of sermons serve, with God's blessing, to revive your recollections, renew your gratitude, quicken your diligence, and reanimate your hopes. They have not been meant to teach novelties, but to promote holy repenting, holy believing, holy fighting against sin, holy obeying, and holy dying. I beg your prayers for a blessing on this effort to do good to souls. Forget not to intercede for younger Christians, and for impenitent sinners. Refuse me not, when I once again entreat your prayers for myself, that after having preached to others, I may not be a cast-away. And may God help and keep you, my dear brethren, and carry you through every trial, even to the end of your earthly pilgrimage ! May the divine arm strengthen you for dying ! May the good Shepherd be with each of you, in passing through the dark valley ! May the "very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ.”¹ And then, may we all meet in the happy land, to praise, through eternity, the Triune God, the Father who chose, the Son who redeemed, the Holy Spirit who led souls, once in danger, to become, for ever, souls in glory !

¹ 1 Thess. v. 23.

THE END.

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